

Memory and Agency in Ancient China

Shaping the Life History of Objects

Edited by Francis Allard, Yan Sun
and Katheryn M. Linduff



MEMORY AND AGENCY IN ANCIENT CHINA

SHAPING THE LIFE HISTORY OF OBJECTS

Memory and Agency in Ancient China offers a novel perspective on China's material culture. The volume explores the complex 'life histories' of selected objects, whose trajectories as single objects ('biographies') and object types ('lineages') cut across both temporal and physical space. The essays, written by a team of international scholars, analyse the objects in an effort to understand how they were shaped by the constraints of their social, political and aesthetic contexts, just as they were also guided by individual preference and capricious memory. They also demonstrate how objects were capable of effecting change. Ranging chronologically from the Neolithic to the present, and spatially from northern to southern mainland China and Taiwan, this book highlights the varied approaches that archaeologists and art historians use when attempting to reconstruct object trajectories. It also showcases the challenges they face, particularly with the unearthing of objects from archaeological contexts that, paradoxically, come to represent the earliest known point of their 'post-recovery lives'.

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OBJECTS**

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In memory of Pochan, our friend and colleague

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FOREWORD: IN MEMORY OF POCHAN CHEN

Among the venues where the chapters in this volume were first presented was a session called “The Life Histories of Objects in East Asian Prehistory” at the 2010 Society for American Archaeology (SAA) in St. Louis, MO, organized by Francis Allard. At this session, participants, including many of the authors represented in this volume, acted as discussants of pre-circulated drafts of papers, versions of some of which appear here. The paper by Pochan Chen circulated for that session was called “The Transformation of Use and Social Meaning of Salt in Early China.” That paper was an initial attempt to take his Chinese article on this topic, published in 2007 in the history journal *Xinshixue* (Chen 2007), translate it into English, and further develop some of his ideas in relation to notions of the social life of things. The object biography approach that Pochan adopts in this article builds from the influential work of Arjun Appadurai (1986) and Igor Kopytoff (1986), of course, but more influential on the perspective underlying the work is the scholarship by Sidney Mintz (1985), who considered the transformation of values associated with sugar during the early modern period. The transformation of sugar from a luxury to a commodity over time provided a template for understanding how valuables like salt can transform in relation to social and cultural contexts within which they are used, and Pochan was eager to understand and tease out how one can understand this in deeper historical contexts, relying as much on archaeological as historical evidence.

In that same SAA session, I offered an essay on dynamic values of material inspired by the work of David Graeber. Graeber (2001: 115) has argued that negotiations about value are essentially political, and consequentially, our understanding of past political systems must be understood in relation to the role of objects in a particular context. Object roles, and hence their values, are products of their biographies, and not the result of single attributes or sets of attributes, such as scarcity of raw material or labor investment. Instead, a study of object value must consider the intersection of several factors: raw material, labor investment, the identity of producers, the identity of consumers, the divisibility or “commodifiability” of the object, and its capacity to accumulate history. In fact, the value attributed to objects is dynamic and contingent – the consequence of practices of production, use, and discard through an object’s

life history (see Flad 2012). Pochan's paper develops many of these same themes, which is not surprising because we were in the same graduate student cohort in the Interdisciplinary Program in Archaeology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) from 1996 to 2004, both starting and graduating in the same years, took most of the same classes, excavated for eighteen months at the same site for our PhD research, in the same trench (while living in the same hotel room and taking the same vehicle to site every day). We have coauthored a book on the same geographical region as the case study in this paper (Flad and Chen 2013), as well as a number of articles (Chen and Flad 2006; Flad et al. 2005, 2009), and even my single-authored book (Flad 2011) owes a lot to my conversations and our long-term collaboration. Yet again, in reading the final version of this piece, I see how his thinking evolved from the earlier versions of this work. His development of these themes has a productive twist, however. He has now adopted the notion of diversions from Appadurai to explore how these transitions in the value of salt through the historical periods he considers took place. It is not surprising to me or anyone else who knew Pochan well that even posthumously he can contribute something new and interesting to the conversation.

Those who knew him well are legion. Among them are the editors and contributors to this volume, of course, but also the many hundreds who attended his memorial service on July 20, 2015. He passed away unexpectedly from heart failure at the age of forty-one on June 28th of that year, shortly after having completed teaching for the spring semester, and not long after having returned from a stint in Gansu, China conducting archaeological fieldwork. His passing was completely unexpected, and he was in the midst of many different projects, among which was the completion of edits to the article in this volume and others. As detailed more extensively elsewhere (Flad 2016), Pochan was born in Jilong, Taiwan in 1973 and attended high school and college in Taipei, receiving his BA in Anthropology at National Taiwan University (NTU) in 1995. After completing his studies there, he spent one year as a research assistant at Academia Sinica before moving to UCLA for his MA (1999) and PhD work (2004). His PhD thesis, "Salt Production and Distribution from the Neolithic Period to Han Dynasty in Eastern Sichuan Basin, China," was based on extensive fieldwork at the site of Zhongba, in Zhong County, Chongqing and subsequent lab work in Beijing. After receiving his PhD he returned to NTU as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology, where he was promoted to Associate Professor in 2014. There, in addition to continuing his work on the archaeology of salt, he taught a wide range of courses, including statistical analysis, GIS, physical anthropology, gender issues in archaeology, historical archaeology, archaeological theory, and seminars focused on Chinese archaeology.

It is fitting that the editors have dedicated this volume to Pochan. His impact on everyone who knew him was profoundly positive, he was a dedicated



o.1. Pochan Chen at the Three Gorges. (Photo: with permission of Kuei-chen Lin.)

friend, colleague, and teacher, and his influence on the thinking of colleagues and students was always inspiring. The compiling of an edited volume such as this one takes dedication and labor, and one hopes the result can be similarly inspiring for others who are wrestling with similar issues in various archaeological and historical contexts.

Rowan Flad (Cambridge, MA, November, 2017)

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INTRODUCTION: MEMORY AND AGENCY IN ANCIENT CHINA: SHAPING THE LIFE HISTORIES OF OBJECTS

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Some years ago, while on a research trip to Mongolia, one of the editors came across a small bowl that had been carved out of wood by a reindeer herder while away on an extended stay with his herd. Aware of the obvious interest in the bowl, the man offered to part with it, although it was made clear by the guide accompanying our group that a monetary gift would be expected in return. On the advice of the guide, a specified amount was offered and accepted. The bowl now sits on a fireplace mantel in an American city, filled with cowrie shells collected on a long-ago diving trip to the Florida Keys, and effortlessly lodged between an inexpensive silver-colored clock and a decorated gourd recently obtained from Peru.

A moment's reflection reveals that the story of the wooden bowl – its trajectory over what turned out to be (at least for a wooden bowl) an eventful 'life' – contains within it elements beyond the details of its manufacture, use and movement. Put simply, an object's life history (or, alternatively in this essay, its trajectory) cannot be told without reference to those human lives that guided – and intersected with – its complex path over time and space. Beyond the physical actions of those individuals who produced and transported the bowl, these human elements include the perceptions, emotions, expectations and social rules that attended each step of its trajectory, including its human-guided penetration of new social worlds. Beyond moving across geographical space, the bowl in question also crossed a number of other boundaries: a functional divide (from utilitarian to display), a socio-economic one (from less to

more privileged), along with a sudden transition to a dramatically different ‘regime of value’. Together, such transformations help account for uneasiness about the initial exchange – involving as it did the purchase, objectification and re-contextualization of a culturally meaningful object – as well as the more mundane concern felt about the very terms of the economic transaction – how much is such an object really worth?

Lest the story of the wooden bowl appear to illustrate an atypical trajectory experienced by an object under singular circumstances, a consideration of the artifacts, products and materials which surround us – and often play central roles in our lives – reveals similarly complex paths and transformations, with objects reaching final ‘destinations’ which even their maker would have never anticipated. Most common of all, commodities – computer chips, light bulbs and other items produced in sufficiently large quantities to meet a collective want or need, and whose economic value is set by impersonal market forces – reveal movement along lengthy and often shadowy routes across the globe, with many commodified items themselves constructed of multiple parts, each with their own manufacturing origin. On a more personal level, an heirloom, antique or other item of sentimental appeal owes part of its value to the real or imagined events and associations which marked its path to the present. And while people do successfully sell personal items that for some time remained isolated from market forces, the process can be emotionally charged, reflecting uncertainty and often surprise at the item’s suddenly revealed market value. The violence of this valuation process becomes evident, for example, when an Antique Roadshow expert tells an incredulous participant that a painted metal can recovered from a cobwebbed attic is worth thousands of dollars, or (less joyfully) when a homeowner wishing to downsize discovers that a loved and cared-for dining room table built by his grandfather holds little economic value and would be best dealt with through charity.

The study of objects should by any measure draw the attention of anyone interested in understanding human nature and behavior. Human beings endlessly interact with the material world which surrounds them and of which they are a part, deriving from those associations benefits that are alternatively – and sometimes simultaneously – utilitarian, emotional and economic. Many have written about such links, including economists, historians, art historians, sociologists, philosophers, cultural anthropologists and archaeologists. More recently, the deliberate and methodical study of object trajectories by some social scientists has alerted scholars to the potential of adopting an object-centered diachronic approach, resulting in the increasing popularity of studies which focus on the ‘life histories’ of objects and chart their shifting associations with people over the course of the objects’ ‘lives’. Such approaches view objects as having social lives akin to human lives, with some even arguing that objects themselves possess the power of human-like ‘agency’.

Each of the case studies assembled in this volume focuses on the life history of an object, object type (category), image or substance (in this case salt) which over the course of a defined period in the past saw some use within the territory encompassed by present-day mainland China (or, in the case of one of the chapters, on the island of Taiwan). The volume's case studies overlap methodologically and interpretively with studies carried out by previous researchers interested in how individual objects and object types in other parts of the world were transformed as they moved along their own trajectories. Beyond this, the volume aims to infuse some amount of methodological rigor into the task of piecing together object trajectories, generate knowledge and insights into our understanding of the temporal trajectories followed by specific objects, object types and materials in China, and consider the possibility that some 'life histories' may in fact be culturally specific.

BACKGROUND

Although attempts at systematically viewing objects from the perspective of their complex and socially meaningful 'lives' extend back several decades, the approach is itself rooted in earlier archaeological, ethnographic and art historical methods and paradigms. It was this interest in objects and how archaeologists and art historians approach them currently that initiated a session at one annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology to discuss the theme of 'The Life of Objects'. Encouraged to think through this issue and contribute relevant case studies to this volume, the authors have benefited from crossing over traditional art historical and anthropological disciplinary bounds, methods and paradigms. The following discussion offers a brief background of some of the contributions made by these disciplines to the 'life history' of objects approach and raises questions that arise from current thinking about the enriching value of the study of objects, whether excavated or held by museums, as vital evidence of human efforts to make and use artifacts.

Foundations

The charting of object trajectories over time stands as a cornerstone of archaeological and art historical research about ancient societies. Already by the nineteenth century, the practice of excavating by stratigraphic units had permitted the development of broad relative chronologies based on information about the pace of change in the form and features of artifacts (within single artifact types). Even without stratigraphic information, seriation methods – as developed by Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) in Egypt – could also be used to generate relative chronologies, relying on the (not always supported) assumption that change in artifact form is gradual rather than punctuated (Petrie 1899).

Some early archaeologists viewed the development of artifact types over time in other ways as well. Augustus Pitt Rivers (1827–1900) saw in developmental trajectories evidence of processes akin to Darwinian natural selection, with ‘better adapted’ objects gradually replacing less efficient ones and single artifacts giving rise – through a process analogous to Darwinian speciation – to divergent trajectories defined by distinctive artifact forms and functions (Lane Fox 1875). More recently, archaeologists have also developed a range of methods meant to chart the trajectories of individual objects. The better known of these include studies of ‘site formation processes’ and of ‘chaînes opératoires’ (‘operational sequences’), the latter a concept developed by French cultural anthropologists and archaeologists and which takes into account those social and mental processes acting in sequence to guide object trajectories (Schiffer 1983; Sellet 1993). Together, these approaches are meant to account for an object’s entire ‘life’, whose ‘stages’ include the initial procurement of constituent materials, the object’s manufacturing sequence, its actual use (over the course of its ‘use life’), its intentional or unintentional discard and the many post-depositional natural and cultural processes which may impact it prior to its discovery by an archaeologist. More specifically, archaeologists came to recognize the significant impact which various ‘site formation processes’ could have on artifacts. Such processes include, among others, site erosion, animal activity, water transport, plowing, construction events (e.g. the digging of house foundations and canals), and (following rediscovery) the reuse and repurposing of artifacts through physical alteration. As a result of such transformations, recovered objects typically differ in often significant ways (shape, size, completeness, functional efficacy, color, location and associated remains) not only from their manufactured progenitor, but even from their more recent forms at the time of loss, breakage or intentional discard.

The ‘life history’ approach – as applied to human beings – has long played an important role in anthropology. This is especially true of ethnographic research, whose varied field methods continue to include the collection of detailed information about an individual’s entire life, consisting not only of that person’s accomplishments, movements, social interactions and the challenges they have faced, but also the broader social context within which their life has been lived. In contrast to sociology, where the recording of individual ‘life histories’ remains secondary to a reliance on quantitative methods better suited to the study of large populations, the ‘life history’ approach – focused at it is on individuals – has thus retained its appeal as one of many methods that ethnographers rely on to generate richer understandings of the structure and workings of small-scale societies.

It is perhaps not surprising that in focusing on individuals and the systems of which they are a part, ethnographers should also develop an interest in how object trajectories intersect with and impact those individual lives.

In fact, much work by ethnographers has focused on the details and broader implications of the physical movement of objects. One early and well-known example is that of the Kula ring in the Massim archipelago of Papua New Guinea, an exchange system characterized by the clockwise movement of red shell-disk necklaces and the counterclockwise movement of shell armbands (Malinowski 1920). This movement of non-utilitarian objects within the Kula exchange system served to define and reinforce social and political relationships among individuals living on different islands of the archipelago, while also providing status-building opportunities to those able to access (and pass along) large numbers of such goods.

Importantly, Malinowski recognized that the goods moving through the Kula system were not ‘gifts’ offered altruistically by generous individuals, but rather objects given with the expectation of receiving something in return. In his work *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss makes the essential point that gifts are closely tied to the giver and that their role is in fact to establish and maintain long-lasting social bonds between the giver and the recipient, with the latter obliged to reciprocate at a later date. In this scheme, the objects are not so much relinquished as they are ‘on loan’, with the transfers carried out during formal exchange ceremonies (Mauss 1990). Others have pointed out that the ‘gifts’ discussed by Mauss can be characterized as ‘inalienable’, in that they cannot be ‘detached’ from the giver and must therefore be returned in some way or other, a contrast with ‘alienable’ goods, whose exchange or sale cedes full control to the buyer/recipient with no expectation of such continued bonds (Gregory 1982). Mauss himself distinguished between the valuable armbands and necklaces exchanged in the Kula system and forms of economically driven barter that accompanied such ‘gift’ exchanges.

The above brief review reveals that by the second half of the twentieth century, scholars had recognized the complexities of object trajectories and the importance of studying such trajectories systematically. Archaeologists had developed solid approaches aimed at charting the many natural and cultural transformations experienced by objects over the course of their ‘lives’, while studies conducted by cultural anthropologists and sociologists had revealed numerous instances of how object trajectories impact – and are impacted by – human lives in ways that are both dynamic and culturally specific, and how objects moving through time and space play a role in affirming and transforming social and political relationships.

No less significant, some had already considered the notion that objects are somehow equivalent to people. Commenting on early developments in anthropology, Hoskins writes that ‘in certain contexts, persons can seem to take on the attributes of things and things can seem to act almost as persons. Studies of traditional exchange systems ... have elaborated on this insight by detailing how objects can be given a gender, name, history and ritual function’

(Hoskins 2006: 74). Speaking of the objects exchanged in the Kula system, Mauss wrote that ‘The vaygu’ā [i.e. the shell armbands and necklaces] are not unimportant things, mere pieces of money. Each one, at least the dearest and the most sought after – and other objects which enjoy the same prestige – each one has its name, a personality, a history, and even a tale attached to it. So much is it so that certain individuals even take their own name from them’ (Mauss 1990: 24). More generally but no less important, anthropologists now appreciated the reality of different types of artifacts moving along different types of trajectories, as illustrated by the distinction which early anthropologists made between ‘gifts’ and ‘commodities’ (even if they did not always refer to these two types of items in this way).

Many of the same issues have informed art historians, although as historians they are bound to the task of reconstructing the past context through study of artifacts regarded as cultural documents alongside of historical texts, archaeological and archival records and other data. In addition, art historians, and especially those who work in the Far East, have struggled with how to represent materials fairly and appropriately in the Asian (or in our case Chinese) context. The field of art history (and anthropology as well) was born in an intellectual atmosphere in the nineteenth century that was based in Western European philosophical principles that do not always fit well when explaining how and why things change in the Asian historical context. The notion of time varies dramatically in the Chinese and European contexts, for example. Importantly, art historians are bound by the history of a region, area, site or location for each artifact considered and begin with the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? Art historical analysis typically does not result in the testing of a theoretical model, as anthropological archaeologists characteristically do, but in an explanation of the place, purpose and makeup of each artifact in its local context and date and more occasionally across time.

With the object/artifact/material culture as the starting point for art historians, formalist approaches sought to seriate and position types and styles in an attempt to develop chronologies and diagnostic typologies, not unlike the archaeologists, but largely within the context of local or regional histories. Linear trajectories of history ruled these analyses such that canons of representation and visual expression emerged – classic vs. baroque, for instance. This sort of linear thinking has broken down, especially since it was challenged in the 1960s, but still the debate exists about how to interpret visual materials. What is the relative value of emic vs. etic research in attempting to explain why objects look and function the way they do? Should one develop a contextual analysis, or a social history of art? Where possible, will archival research and historical texts give thorough explanations for more than documentation of place and style of manufacture? What will interpretive theory developed in other disciplines such as cultural anthropology or archaeology, history, religious

studies, sociology, biology or psychology, for example, add to the analyses of objects?

These interpretive issues especially led art historical members of the SAA panels to search for ways to cross over the methodological and theoretical divide. In the papers here, art historians continue to use the object as the starting point and archaeologists use artifacts as a means to explain process, but these papers represent explorations into how to understand the function and role of artifacts and how to make use of the long history of interest among anthropological theorists in interpretation of material culture.

The Social Life of Things

Published in 1986, the edited volume titled *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* served as a catalyst in the expansion and systematization of studies focusing on object trajectories (Appadurai 1986). In fact, recent authors regularly cite in their own work passages and ideas taken from the volume's first two essays, both written by anthropologists: 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value' (by Arjun Appadurai, who is also the volume's editor), and 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process' (by Igor Kopytoff).

In keeping with ideas put forward by earlier social scientists and social historians, including art historians such as Arnold Hauser (1951), the volume's authors encouraged the view that object trajectories are analogous to human biographies, and thus that they can be studied in a similar manner. As Kopytoff points out in his essay:

In doing the biography of a thing, one would ask questions similar to those one asks about people: What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its "status" and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such a thing? What are the recognized "ages" or periods in the thing's "life", and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness? (1986: 66–7)

As indicated in its title, the volume focuses on commodities, arguing for studies that chart their temporal trajectories and recognize the multiple points at which culture impacts commodity pathways. More specifically, the volume serves as a cultural counterpoint to a strict Marxian conception of things as commodities, whereby objects become physically and socially dissociated from the labor invested in their initial production and assigned values determined solely by market forces. According to Marx, upon entering the commoditized economy, an object becomes 'alienated' from the people and social world

which produced it, taking on a specified value which permits and channels its economic exchange for any other commodity (including other categories of objects), a transaction that is itself facilitated (in monetary economies) by the use of money (Marx 1961). Marx also referred to the ‘fetishism’ of commodities, pointing out that in a commoditized economy, the economic relations that tie objects to one another become preeminent as indicators and depictions of the social dimensions of production, thus masking the reality of unequal relations between worker and owner.

In contrast to Marx’s economic perspective on the production and fate of things, the essays in *The Social Life of Things* underscore the importance which culture itself plays in mediating and regulating the trajectories which commodities follow from the time of their production to the moment of their discard. Thus, Kopytoff makes the case that a single object’s trajectory may involve movement in and out of separate commoditization and singularization phases. In some cases, ‘singular’ objects of initially limited worth or interest enter the commoditization phase at the first sign of a nostalgia-driven amplification of interest, as in the case of ‘old beer cans, matchbooks, and comic books … [which] suddenly become worthy of being collected … [moving] from the sphere of the singularly worthless to that of the expensive singular’ (Kopytoff 1986: 80). In other cases, singularization is associated with conscious resistance to the absorption of ‘sacralized’ objects into the commodity market. Thus, the (never before attempted) valuation of objects of collective significance and symbolism – for example, founding historical texts and sculptures of national heroes – is forcefully resisted by those outraged at the thought of putting a price on an object imbued with sacredness and the power of cultural representation.

Interestingly, Kopytoff also suggests that in comparison to small-scale societies, more complex systems allow their members – or constituencies – greater freedom to singularize items which they believe deserve to be so treated. Kopytoff’s central message, in the end, is that it is not possible to chart object trajectories without recognizing the constituent role which culture plays in guiding such trajectories: ‘A culturally informed economic biography of an object would look at it as a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories’ (1986: 68). At the broadest level, Kopytoff’s essay – along with the volume’s other contributions – reveals not only the operation of different types of object trajectories operating in parallel (as already indicated in earlier anthropological discussions of ‘gifts’ and ‘commodities’), but also the possibility of individual objects moving in and out of the commodity pathway (a process which Appadurai refers to as ‘commodity pathway diversion’) and being temporarily transformed into other types of objects such as gifts and ‘singularized’ items. It is important to note that this more dynamic view of

object trajectories also recognizes that ‘jumps’ between trajectories are ultimately meditated by culture itself.

Recent Studies

Recent decades have witnessed continued interest in ‘biographical’ studies of material culture, with much of this research focused on the construction of (what many authors refer to as) ‘meaning’ and identity as objects interact dynamically – and, according to some, as active ‘agents’ – with persons over the course of their ‘lives’.

In their discussion of masks, totem poles and other objects among the Kwakwaka’wakw of the Pacific Northwest coast, Gosden and Marshall (1999) suggest that objects have to be ‘performed’ – and the performance ‘witnessed’ – before they are able to acquire meaning. As the authors point out in regard to masks: ‘But, it was the act of showing which was powerful and which established a mask’s meaning. Possession of a mask was not in itself significant because the mask possessed meaning only in the context of its performance’ (1999: 175). According to Marilyn Strathern, objects in Melanesian society do not exist independently of people, so that ‘gifts’ – which travel through exchange networks and involve transactions among multiple individuals – carry with them the distributed parts of their owners as they are transported to other locations and serve to produce and cement social relationships. In this way, individuals are seen to have ‘agency’ through the many objects which they have passed along to others (Strathern 1988). In the view of Janet Hoskins, objects are intimately tied to human emotions and aspirations, giving meaning to people’s lives and structure to their lived experiences (Hoskins 1998).

References in the above-mentioned studies to the capacity of objects to act on human perception, emotions and level of engagement in social and ritual life can be discussed within the context of broader debates about the ‘agency’ of objects, a topic about which much has been written. Speaking of Alfred Gell’s view of material culture and agency, Hoskins writes:

Gell has formulated a theory about the creation of art objects that could in fact be a theory about the creation of all forms of material culture. Art (and other objects) is produced in order to influence the thoughts and actions of others. Even those objects which seem to be without a directly identifiable function – that is, objects which have previously been theorized as simple objects of aesthetic contemplation – are in fact made in order to act upon the world and to act upon other persons. Material objects thus embody complex intentionalities and mediate social agency. (2006: 75)

Although there is insufficient space here to adequately address the topic of objects as ‘active’ items with ‘agency’, it can at least be pointed out that

discussions have revolved around a number of issues, including the level of human intentionality involved, the manner in which objects ‘act on’ their surroundings (such as through the human senses), the types of messages transmitted and the resulting impact on individuals as well as on society. In the opinion of the editors, while it is fair to say that objects do impact those individuals with whom they come into contact, this interaction may be driven by different motivations, involve different types of mechanisms and operate at varying levels of ‘consciousness’. When faced with a newly discovered artifact, therefore, one should not uncritically assume that its maker deliberately aimed to manipulate the thoughts and behavior of the object’s intended audience.

The notion that objects have agency has also played a role in interpretations put forward by archaeologists. As discussed further below, and in contrast to ethnographic studies, archaeologists face serious difficulties when trying to understand how artifacts interact with their social environment over the course of their ‘lives’, since archaeological encounters with objects are most often focused on a single moment in time, typically their final depositional context (for example as grave goods or as discarded artifacts). Interestingly, archaeological studies which admit the possibility of grave goods having agency – as opposed to simply serving the needs of the deceased in the afterlife – often view them as items intentionally placed in the burials for the purpose of communicating information about the status or aspirations of the tomb occupant, his or her relatives or larger social group. In such interpretations, objects are often thought to serve as ‘propaganda tools’ deployed for the benefit of the elite or anyone else wishing to upgrade their status and standing.

The issue of whether – and if so, how – objects impact their social surroundings as active agents is one that any study attempting to chart the trajectory of an object should keep in mind. Put simply, support for the idea that objects have ‘agency’ compels us also to recognize the existence of an ongoing two-way interaction between objects and their social environment, with neither acting independently of the other. The operation of what is in fact a type of ‘feedback loop mechanism’ in turn underscores the difficulty of charting object trajectories, whose direction and pace are therefore determined by recurrent instances of contact between objects and individuals, with each impacting the other in sometimes unpredictable ways. The challenge which such type of interaction presents to the modeling of culture change in societies known solely through archaeological remains becomes immediately obvious.

STUDYING THE LIFE HISTORIES OF OBJECTS: METHODOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION

Studies of object trajectories conducted over the past three decades signal a heightened and welcome sensitivity to the fact of objects as constituent

elements of human lives, as reflections of cultural and historical processes and as agents able to impact human perception and action. Looking back on this scholarship, however, one soon recognizes a lack of consistency in terminology and the absence of a clear methodological framework within which life history studies of objects are carried out. It is suggested that such a framework is needed and that it should assist in the clarification of distinctions between types of trajectories, as well as highlight the range of mechanisms and circumstances (reasons) under which objects change over time. The discussion below addresses some of these issues.

Object Trajectories: Typology and Boundaries

We note at the outset the need to distinguish between two fundamental types of object trajectories (life histories) as these pertain to objects: biographies, which focus on what happens to single objects over the course of their individual ‘lives’, and lineages, which chart the long-term trajectories of specific types (or categories) of objects maintained through reproduction (or copying) (note: the volume’s editors wish to thank Xiaolong Wu for proposing the use of the word ‘lineage’ as it pertains to object types). Although recognized by previous authors, this distinction has yet to be expressed in a consistent or unambiguous manner, as with the contrast made by one author between ‘object biographies’ and ‘life histories’ (Joy 2009). As others have pointed out, these two types of life histories present the researcher with different methodological and interpretive challenges, a distinction which to some extent also impacts which disciplines are best suited to study each type of life history.

Object Biographies: It is often not possible to chart a single object’s entire trajectory from the time of its manufacture to that of its discard. The problem is particularly acute in the case of studies which rely exclusively on archaeological findings, whereby an object’s sole point of contact with the researcher typically lies near – or at – the end of its ‘natural life’, such as when it is discarded following breakage or deposited as a burial offering. In such cases, it may be possible to reconstruct some portion of the object’s earlier life through reliance on different lines of evidence: cross-regional stylistic comparisons, historical references (when available), manufacturing techniques and (increasingly) physicochemical analyses aimed at identifying the source of the object’s constituent materials (for example, the location of stone, clay and metal ore sources). The problem is often (but not always so) less acute in the case of ethnographic and those art historical studies which focus on recent time periods, since the object of study can sometimes be followed over the entire course of its life, or at least for a good portion of it. In fact, it is worth mentioning that the very notion of dynamic (and lifelike) object biographies first emerged from ethnographic studies able to gather sufficient information to chart and compare such complex trajectories.

Object Lineages: Studies of transformations in object types over time are particularly well suited to archaeology, whose ability to identify long-term change counterbalances the commonplace absence of fine temporal resolution within single archaeological strata. As mentioned earlier, studies of changes in an artifact's form and style over time extend back to the professionalization of the discipline in the nineteenth century. However, even as researchers may be familiar with the task of charting transformations in object types over time, they must also recognize the need to clearly define a type's temporal, spatial and typological parameters (or 'boundaries'). Failure to do so results in a blurring of the outlines and features of the object type (and therefore 'lineage'), as well as in a decrease in the study's effectiveness at generating data that can then be incorporated into cross-cultural models. Thus, life history studies of specific object types should ideally refer to beginning and end dates, and provide maps showing the spatial distribution and extent of the object type in question. No less important, the fact that the shape and decoration of objects often change only gradually over space requires the researcher to either expand the spatial extent of the analysis (to include more/all typological variants), or identify meaningful material or functional traits which permit the identification of a well-defined object type with clear spatial and temporal boundaries.

What Changes, and Why

Researchers interested in charting object biographies and lineages should make explicit those material and functional elements whose alteration they are recording. They should also attempt to identify the reason(s) behind such changes. Importantly, the systematic collection of such information facilitates the comparison of life histories across different objects, time periods and locations, and thus the identification of similarities and differences across different trajectories. The following discussion reviews some of the many possible transformations which individual objects and object types undergo over time, along with the circumstances under which such changes occur.

Changes to individual objects over the course of their 'lives' can take many forms. Physical alterations – which can be intentional, accidental and/or natural – may involve the breakage of the object, the addition or removal of portions of the artifact (including functional or decorative elements) or its alteration for the purpose of incorporation into another artifact. Non-material transformations include changes to an object's function, socio-political associations and 'power' or desirability as it is performed, touched or owned by a series of illustrious owners, or simply because it is rare. Operating over longer periods of time and often involving extended sequences of 'copying events',

object lineages provide opportunities for the further elaboration of the kinds of changes experienced by single objects, although in this case producers of copies have the opportunity to more fully alter the physical attributes of the object to meet novel or future anticipated needs. Importantly, object lineages are often associated with changes in the spatial extent of an object type over time. Furthermore, primary object lineages may also sometimes ‘split’ into secondary lineages, with each developing independently from the other, thus providing the researcher with an opportunity to generate a ‘phylogeny’ (i.e. ‘family tree’) of related lineages.

The reasons or circumstances under which changes to individual objects and object types take place are as varied as the physical and functional changes themselves. At the broadest level, alterations to the appearance or function of objects reflect – at least to some extent – the demands and opportunities of modified social, economic and political circumstances. More immediately, changes to objects and object types result from decisions made at the individual or group level. These include, among others, aesthetic choices made by independent or sponsored artisans, attempts by groups to profit from the commoditization and taxation of goods, the accumulation of rare objects by ambitious individuals for the purpose of display and the production of artifacts meant to serve as symbols of group identity, of the elite’s mandate to rule or of disaffection with the status quo. Less deliberately, changes to the appearance or function of an object type may result from the effect of interregional interaction, from random (non-directed) processes of cultural transmission or – more simply – from the fact that the object has traveled extensively through time and space, with its original function now unknown.

Cross-Cultural Comparisons and the Specificity of Trajectories

Studies of regionally focused object trajectories should ideally consider how they differ from – and are similar to – trajectories recorded in other regions of the world. Ethnographic studies already point to the likely operation of culturally specific trajectories: thus, on the coast of the Pacific Northwest, objects first need to be ‘performed’ before they can begin ‘interacting’ in a meaningful manner with the human world, while in Melanesia, exchanged objects do not exist independently of people and carry within them portions of each of their past owners. Insights provided by such studies encourage us to consider the possibility that distinctive cultural features may have both guided and constrained an object’s trajectory in unique ways. Of course, the identification of such distinctive trajectories requires that the researcher also be familiar with work carried out in other regions of the world.

THIS VOLUME

The studies assembled in this volume have been selected on the basis of their pertinence to the study of object trajectories in China (although one chapter focuses on salt and another on an image). Ten of the eleven chapters discuss material produced or discovered within the territory of present-day mainland China, while one looks at objects made on the island of Taiwan. Reflecting the broad approach advocated by the volume's editors, the studies range widely with respect to time period (from the prehistoric period to the twentieth century), the type of object discussed (stone artifacts; ceramic vessels; jades; bronze vessels, bells and swords; toilet boxes; bi discs made of different materials; and ethnographic objects of different types) and the location or spatial distribution of single objects and object types. In contrast to most of the volume's studies, which focus on specific artifact types and time periods, the first and final chapters rely on a broader range of objects over an extended time span to offer general observations about the 'life histories' of objects in China.

Most of the studies fall within the historical period and rely on a combination of archaeological data, formal analysis of the artifacts themselves and information gleaned from texts (including inscriptions). In contrast, archaeological data plays a central role in those few studies which focus on material dating to the Neolithic period (thus predating the emergence of dynastic states in the second millennium BCE) or on later objects found in (preliterate) areas located beyond the expanding (literate) states. Although most of the studies do not explicitly refer to 'object biographies' or 'object lineages', the discussion of the material presented in the studies underscores the authors' awareness of the distinction between the two types of trajectories. With this in mind, it is also noted that although individual studies tend to concentrate on charting either object biographies or object lineages, references to both types of trajectories can be found in most of the chapters.

The volume presents multiple illustrations of changes in the appearance and/or function of single objects over the course of their 'lives' (object biographies). Physical changes mentioned by the authors include evidence of intentional breakage ([chapter 3](#): Neolithic jades in the Middle Yangzi River region), the alteration of objects for the purpose of producing new shapes and functions ([chapter 11](#): a Han dynasty 'box' carved out of a Neolithic cong tube), as well as the addition of decorative elements to ancient artifacts ([chapter 11](#): a Neolithic cong set into a silver stand). A number of chapters also refer to instances of functional reinterpretation, as in the case of individual objects reassigned – sometimes at a much later date – to roles as markers of personal identity ([chapter 1](#): Neolithic jade 'dragons' found in a Shang dynasty elite tomb), as symbols of national identity ([chapter 10](#): exhibits of Taiwanese aboriginal

objects in mainland China) and as grave goods ([chapter 2](#): pre-Han non-local bronzes in Lingnan).

The studies also address changes in object types over time (object lineages). Alongside modifications in the material attributes of objects, such as size, material, color, surface and other decorative elements ([chapter 6](#): bird-pillar basins during the Warring States period), transformations also include the decoupling of form and material ([chapter 9](#): *bi* discs), the decoupling of artifacts initially meant to function in tandem ([chapter 6](#): bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels during the Warring States period), the mediating role played by images in the production of artifacts ([chapter 11](#): bronze vessels during the Song dynasty), the redirection of object types to funerary contexts ([chapter 7](#): toilet boxes during the Warring States period) and the adoption of new roles ([chapter 11](#): Song dynasty copies of early bronzes acting as symbols of – and links to – the past). Some of the studies also identify what appear to have been sudden ‘splits’ and subsequent divergences in object trajectories ([chapter 7](#): the occasional placement of toilet boxes in inner coffins during the Qin dynasty).

Although two of the chapters focus on the ‘life histories’ of elements which are not ‘objects’ per se – salt, a consumer good ([chapter 4](#)) and images ([chapter 8](#)) – many of the object-centered changes listed above nevertheless apply to the characterization of their trajectories. The study of salt in early China records its functional reinterpretation over an extended period of time, in this case from a prestige good during the Neolithic and early dynastic periods to a commodity by the Eastern Zhou period. The other study focuses on the ‘lineage’ of an image, namely the mounted archer motif during the Qin and Han dynasties, with the author presenting evidence for changes in the motif along a number of dimensions, including its spatial distribution, socio-political associations and supporting medium.

Along with charting how individual objects, object types, images or consumer goods changed over time, the majority of the studies in the volume also consider the reasons or circumstances lying at the root of these transformations. Many of the proposed explanations refer to the broad social, political and economic setting under which the changes occurred. Examples include the taxation and commoditization of salt during the Zhou and Han dynasties as a way to increase state revenue ([chapter 4](#)), the production and display of archaizing bronzes during the Song dynasty (in concert with emerging nativist forces: [chapter 11](#)), the expansion of the mounted archer motif during the Han dynasty (itself tied to military successes against the Xiongnu: [chapter 8](#)) and the placement of toilet boxes in late Zhou graves (reflecting the collapse of earlier codified systems used to indicate rank: [chapter 7](#)). Other explanations proposed in the volume to account for changes in the appearance or function of object types refer to the impact of interregional interaction, increases in

technical ability, changing traditions in craftsmanship as well as the effect of non-directed ('unconscious') alterations ([chapter 6](#): bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels during the Warring States period).

The loss of an object's original function as a result of its extensive movement through space and time is also proposed by a few of the studies as an explanation for its eventual incorporation and use in novel ritual or social practices ([chapter 1](#): Hongshan and Liangzhu culture jades; [chapter 2](#): the burial of non-local bronze vessels and bells in Lingnan during the first millennium BCE). Notably, the role played by emotions and beliefs in dictating the fate of artifacts is hinted at in the case of Neolithic jades discovered in the Middle Yangzi River region, where the evidence points to the intentional breakage of objects and the placement of only portions of them in the grave, thus suggesting the continued 'enchainment' (through complementary pieces) linking the living and the dead following burial ([chapter 3](#)). Finally, some changes to object types were also undoubtedly driven by ambitious individuals ('human agents'), as in the case of elaborate bronze bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels whose production was likely sponsored by King Cuo of Zhongshan ([chapter 6](#)).

Contributions and Limitations

Viewed as a whole, the volume's case studies and their attendant discussions address a broad range of issues which pertain to the study of object trajectories ('life histories') and which parallel approaches and interpretations proposed in earlier studies by scholars from varied disciplines. As summarized above, the chapters offer wide-ranging illustrations and discussions of how single objects and object types change over time, along with the varied and complex circumstances under which such transformations occur. Interestingly, only one of the volume's studies – [chapter 4](#), which reviews the changing role of salt in early China – explicitly refers to the concept of commoditization introduced some thirty years ago by Appadurai and Kopytoff in the influential volume *The Social Life of Things*.

It is significant that most of the studies in the volume focus on the interpretation of objects which were found as grave goods (or, in one case, as stray finds). Even in the case of those studies which make use of textual sources, such evidence is generally limited to contextual information regarding the overarching political setting or to brief observations about an object's function at specific times and locations. A few of the studies do comment on the 'stages' navigated by objects and object types over the course of their 'lives', as in the case of the field collection of ethnographic materials in Taiwan and their subsequent 'movement' from one type of museum presentation to another ([chapter 10](#)), and the rediscovery, during the Song dynasty, of ancient bronzes, followed by their reproduction as images and copies made from images ([chapter 11](#)).

Notwithstanding the above examples, it is fair to say that, on the whole, the volume's studies face the same types of limitations typically encountered by archaeologists, with little said about how objects weaved in and out of their social world, experiencing at each stage of their 'lives' the possibility of novel associations or even their temporary reassignment to other types of pathways. Having said this, a number of studies do refer to the 'agency' of objects at the end of their 'lives', with most 'acting' on things or people after their placement in burials. Examples include jade bi discs increasing the effectiveness of non-jade discs through physical proximity ([chapter 9](#)), the emotional impact which toilet boxes had on mourners ([chapter 7](#)) and the perception of elevated status communicated by prestige goods ([chapters 2, 5, 6](#) and [9](#)).

It is clear that archaeological and art historical studies aimed at charting the 'life histories' of objects will continue to benefit from insights provided by ethnographic or (high-resolution) historical research. Of course, the interpretation of archaeological materials remains subject to the shifting forces of current paradigms, some of these driven by political agendas. Still, and as discussed earlier, archaeology's long-term perspective and art historians' interest in the evolution of visual attributes and manufacturing techniques of the objects as well as social meanings invested onto them does offer researchers the opportunity to investigate – in ways that some other disciplines cannot – the features of extended object trajectories, generating results and perspectives such as those submitted by many of the authors in this volume. Beyond this, a consideration of the approaches adopted and patterns revealed by the studies also allows us to offer a number of additional pertinent observations (discussed below), most of these rarely discussed in previous studies aimed at recording and understanding the 'life history' of objects.

1. Defining Object Types: The need to clarify the definitional boundaries of object types prior to analysis is evident from a number of studies in the volume. Object types are defined in this volume through careful examinations of material, form and ornamentation of the artifact and stylistic characteristics of the image, their fabrication techniques when information is available and the context within which they were used. The study of Neolithic burials in the Middle Yangzi River region ([chapter 3](#)) reveals that funerary jades comprised different types of objects: locally made intact ornaments and other types of jades which were intentionally broken prior to burial. It is therefore important to distinguish between what were in fact two distinct life histories, whose details would be lost should the analysis simply focus on 'burial jades' as a whole. Similarly, the study of bi discs ([chapter 9](#)) reveals what appear to have been multiple trajectories of bi discs differing in regard to geographical focus, material and/or medium. Of particular interest is the likelihood that the 'higher-resolution' trajectories followed by regional bi discs were linked

to one another at some point in the past, presenting the researcher with the possibility of piecing together a potentially complex ‘phylogeny’ (i.e. ‘family tree’) of trajectories marked by multiple points of divergence.

2. The Effect of Constraints on Trajectories: A number of the studies in the volume point to the effect which various types of constraints can have on object trajectories (object lineages) and on limiting the range of ‘fates’ experienced by single objects at the end of their ‘lives’ (object biographies). In some cases, such constraints operate at the mechanical or physical level, as in the case of certain material attributes ([chapter 1](#): an object’s shape and ability to reflect light), or mechanical pairing ([chapter 6](#): bird-pillar basins, which fit on top of cylindrical vessels), all of which place limits on the shape and appearance of subsequent copies of the object. Constraints mentioned in the studies include adherence to tradition in workshops ([chapter 6](#)) and the recipient society’s level of socio-political complexity, the latter of which determines whether an object of distant origin is disposed of in a funerary or non-funerary manner ([chapter 2](#)).
3. The Power of Material, Form, Ornamentation and Inscription: Although objects can be said to have ‘agency’ insofar as they possess the ability to evoke emotions and associations in the viewer ([chapter 7](#): personal toilet boxes placed in Han dynasty burials), a few of the volume’s studies also suggest that such reactions can also be elicited by no more than an object’s constituent material, general form, decorative program and intentionally embedded inscriptions, thus allowing for significant flexibility in how copies of objects are made and how object lineages develop over time. In the case of bi discs in early China, for example, both the disc form and jade material remained consistently potent elements over the course of Chinese history, with each also able to elicit powerful emotions and associations on its own ([chapter 9](#)). Similar mental processes associated with the evocative power of certain materials may have been at play in the case of the Han dynasty ‘box’ carved out of a Neolithic jade cong tube ([chapter 11](#)), while the ability of Song, Ming and Qing dynasty archaizing bronze vessels to reference the past seems not to have been diminished by the incorporation of prominent decorative elements in these (later) copies of early bronzes ([chapter 11](#)). The visual potency of the hunting image embraced by provincial low- and middle-rank military officials ([chapter 8](#)) or the revised representation of the bird as a prey on bronze basins commissioned by King Cuo ([chapter 6](#)) projects a deliberate expression of social and political identity of their patrons and users. The same performative power of the object can also be conveyed through the straightforward statement of the ownership as is seen in inscriptions on the willow-leaf-shaped sword ([chapter 5](#)). Although such personal identification would not be communicated to illiterate viewer, what they do elicit, as is the case with ornamentation, is an intimate connection between an object and a person through enrichment and agency of the artifact.

4. Post-Depositional Trajectories: The study of Neolithic jades in the Middle Yangzi River region ([chapter 3](#)) proposes that single objects may have been intentionally broken at the time of burial, with one portion remaining in the grave and the other held by the deceased's living relatives, a practice meant to preserve their prior relationship. At the very least, this type of study alerts us to the fact that the 'lives' of single objects may extend beyond their 'final' placement in graves ([chapter 3](#)) or in natural settings ([chapter 2](#)), not only as items 'resurrected' by archaeologists at a later date, but also as they continue to serve – at least temporarily – as bridges linking people to their deceased relatives or to natural localities of symbolic importance.
5. Divergent Lives of Objects: The life of an object can be an ongoing or evolving process across a long period of time and generating divergent trajectories. In the case of [chapter 9](#), the performative power of the toilet box does not come to an end with the entombment of its original owner. It remained in the life of the living and became an extension of deceased individual and an embodiment of a social memory of the person, consequently creating a new life chapter for the object. In [chapters 1](#) and [11](#), archaic object types with a hiatus after initial use were rediscovered and reintroduced into the social life of users at a much later time in Chinese history. During the process of transmission, objects (including their ornamentation) in the new phase not only experienced revisions and reinterpretations of morphological features, but were imbued with new meanings. Such resurrections facilitate the manipulation of memories to suit the need of their new patrons. In [chapter 10](#), the life of the object in the case of Taiwanese aboriginal artifacts is a constant renewal process entangled in the social discourse and political circumstance in the modern history of Taiwan.

Life History Approaches and the Study of China

Although the studies in this volume typically refer to – and are sometimes centered on – ideas submitted by scholars who have researched object trajectories in other parts of the world (or other topics of relevance to 'life history' studies), the chapters include only limited attempts at systematically comparing regionally focused trajectories for the purpose of identifying similarities and differences, let alone comment on the possibility that there may be something 'special' or distinctive about object trajectories in China. As discussed earlier in relation to early ethnographic studies conducted in different parts of the world, the search for culturally specific object trajectories should not be viewed as a fool's errand, particularly as culture is known to play a defining role in guiding both object trajectories and object lineages.

Having said this, researchers interested in doing so should pay heed to the following two caveats, both highly relevant to any discussion of the development of material culture in China. First, it is important not to blindly and

automatically impose on interpretations of object trajectories preconceived notions of past cultural and behavioral norms. In the case of China, this would certainly include the commonly held view that ongoing references to a glorious past played a central role in how scholars, politicians and administrators viewed their current conditions and promoted the reestablishment of earlier codes of behavior through adherence to traditional representations of the past (for example, as images or copies of objects). Second, it should not be assumed that distinct object trajectories necessarily operated beyond specific time periods and locations. Here again, the relevance to the study of China is obvious. As Shelach-Lavi ([chapter 1](#)) points out, the fact that Chinese civilization – as viewed from the perspective the Yellow River valley – displays some amount of continuity over thousands of years does not preclude the possibility of frequent discontinuities. Thus the danger of imposing on (prehistoric) Neolithic materials interpretations derived from much later texts.

What, if anything, might therefore be distinctive about object trajectories in China? It does appear as if there existed – at certain times and in certain places – a powerful disposition to reference the past, as in the case of archaizing bronzes in Song to Qing China discussed in [chapter 11](#), or the well-known and accepted artistic practice of copying past masters. Clearly, such culturally based constraints must have impacted the pace of stylistic change at certain times over the course of Chinese history. Interestingly, both material and shape independently changed at varying rates – an idea put forward by some of the studies in this volume – and could have acted as a counterbalancing force that allowed flexibility into the process of copying. In the end, notions about how objects and object types changed over time in China stand as hypotheses to be discussed and tested in a systematic manner on more – and a greater range of – material. As more archaeological material is recovered from prehistoric contexts, the construction of more detailed spatio-temporal frameworks will hopefully help us further clarify the extent to which some object trajectories operating over the course of Chinese history are in fact rooted in ancient times.

Chapter Summaries

The volume's [first chapter](#), by Gideon Shelach-Lavi, approaches the topic of object biographies in early China from the perspective of spatio-temporal 'ruptures' in the trajectories of well-known artifacts with roots in the Neolithic. According to Shelach-Lavi, the post-Neolithic (re)discovery of such 'forgotten' objects – appearing now as exotic items of unknown function – permitted their reinterpretation as markers of identity befitting the needs of their new owners. The evidence marshaled to illustrate this process consists of a number of Neolithic objects and motifs whose apparently sudden reappearance in Shang dynasty contexts indicates significant 'jumps' across gaps of thousands

of kilometers and years. These include Hongshan culture jade ‘dragons’ and Liangzhu culture jade cong (tubes), both of which have in fact been found – as original items and as copies – in the late Shang (elite) tomb of Fuhao. Also mentioned as further examples of Neolithic elements reappearing in Shang contexts are ceramic representations of mythical animals from Northwest China, and (more controversially) the mask motif found on some Liangzhu jades. Shelach-Lavi judiciously observes that the reinterpretation of ‘forgotten’ objects was not limitless, being bounded and guided by the objects’ material attributes (shape, color, brightness). Importantly, he relies on such evidence of ruptures in object trajectories to contest the current model of temporal and spatial continuity proposed to account for the development of Chinese civilization, arguing that further research on the spatio-temporal patterning of objects in early China may further highlight the importance which discontinuity and reinvention played in such developments.

Francis Allard ([chapter 2](#)) considers the issues of movement and reassignment as these inform our understanding of object trajectories in prehistoric Lingnan (Guangdong and Guangxi). He proposes that the fate of an object traveling extensively through space and time (and whose original function has been ‘lost’) does not reflect endless possibilities, being instead guided by various constraints operating within a system of ‘nested practice’. Thus, constraints operating at the most general level are imposed by the level of socio-political complexity of the recipient society, while local traditions determine the specific manner in which an object is handled at the end of its ‘life’. The model is illustrated by a comparison of object trajectories in pre-Qin Lingnan. The first considers southern Guangxi’s stone ‘shovels’, distinctive ritual objects dating to the Neolithic period. It is proposed that a number of these shovels traveled along indirect exchange systems to other parts of Lingnan, where they were finally buried in non-funerary contexts (e.g. on hillsides and near streams) by the inhabitants of what were likely egalitarian societies. A similar fate awaited those first-millennium BCE bronze vessels and bells cast in central or north China and transported to areas of low socio-political complexity in Lingnan. In contrast, in those areas inhabited by more complex societies – as in the case of river valleys providing access to central China – the non-local bronze vessels and bells were included as grave goods in elite burials rather than buried in non-funerary settings. Importantly, the disposal of stone shovels and bronzes was also guided by local practices, even as these operated within the broader schema of funerary vs. non-funerary burial.

Sascha Priewe ([chapter 3](#)) focuses on Neolithic funerary jades along the Middle Yangzi River valley, arguing that a careful consideration of their life histories permits a fuller understanding of what were complex social and ideological roles beyond their traditional identification as manifestations of high status. He emphasizes the specificity of the social meaning of the objects

in their context and location. Recovered from burial urns excavated at sites dating to 2000 BCE, the jades display a range of manufacturing and stylistic origins, a fact which serves as the backdrop for the identification of distinct object trajectories. First, locally produced ornaments (bird pins and human, tiger and beast heads) are typically found as complete artifacts, with the recovery of similar objects at contemporary sites in north China suggesting their movement through extended exchange networks originating in the Middle Yangzi River region. Second, jades are also found as fragments of specific object types: locally made tools, objects manufactured in the Lower Yangzi River area (e.g. bi discs and cong tubes associated with Liangzhu Culture) and locally made copies of these latter ‘foreign’ artifacts. Beyond noting the intentional breakage of these jades prior to burial, Priebe observes that only some of an artifact’s constituent fragments have been found at archaeological sites, suggesting to him the possibility of continued ‘enchainment’ (through complementary pieces) linking the living and the dead following burial. He also warns that archaeologists should pay closer attention to (typically under-reported) artifact fragments, as these serve as vital clues in elucidating the details of object biographies, and thus also the objects’ roles as material expressions of social relations.

Pochan Chen’s ([chapter 4](#)) study of salt production, transportation and consumption from the Neolithic to the Han dynasty stands as the volume’s sole attempt to chart the ‘life history’ of a substance (rather than an object or image). Relying on Arjun Appadurai’s model of ‘commodity pathway diversion’, Chen enriches and qualifies the commonly held perception of salt as a commodity whose production and taxation helped finance the early Chinese states, suggesting that salt was – at least in early periods – a luxury product operating outside the commodity sphere. While archaeological evidence confirms the production – and possible local exchange – of salt at various locations in China during the Neolithic, oracle bone and bronze inscriptions dated to the Shang and Western Zhou dynasties point to its function as a prestige good used in cementing elite relationships, gift-giving, banquets and ancestral rituals. By the Eastern Zhou and Qin periods, sources reveal that the health benefits of salt had been recognized and that it had become a commodity operating in a sphere of expanded production, consumption and interregional trade, with some states involved in its direct production and others instead taxing the producers and merchants. Full state control of salt production, transportation and distribution was finally established during Wudi’s reign at the end of the second century BCE, the result of the government’s search for additional sources of revenue and its fear that insubordinate states would finance their rebellions through the production and taxation of salt. Significantly, this development was accompanied by the full commodification of salt, which was by now available to everyone in markets alongside other staples.

In her careful study of bronze ‘willow-leaf-shaped swords’ in Western Zhou China, Yan Sun ([chapter 5](#)) argues that a ‘life history’ approach to the study of these weapons profitably extends the analysis beyond traditional concerns with typology and ritual vessels. Although this type of sword may have originated in the Chengdu Plain, most examples have been found in the Wei River valley, with the majority recovered from eleventh- to tenth-century BCE burials associated with the state of Yu. Focusing first on the swords found in Yu burials, Sun points to their apparently restricted presence in male graves, the evidence of use wear and their placement alongside the body near the waist. This, she suggests, highlights the parallel roles that swords played as material embodiments of individual lives and identity, as well as indicators of membership in the Yu lineage. Importantly, willow-leaf-shaped swords have also been found at sites associated with other Zhou-affiliated lineages and states, including the state of Yan centered near present-day Beijing. Sun argues that these swords were made in Yu and that they had traveled to areas with which the Yu state maintained some type of relationship (as revealed by bronze inscriptions and shared stylistic traits). Although the swords continue to be found in male burials, they are now more strictly associated with high status and display inconsistent physical proximity to the body, differences which point to their transformation from objects embodying individual identity (in Yu) to scarce prestige goods with attenuated emotional links to the deceased (in these novel contexts). The investigation of the archaeological context within which the swords were recovered leads to the conclusion that the same type of object may have different social meanings across time.

Xiaolong Wu’s ([chapter 6](#)) essay charts the development of a composite artifact found in Warring States burials. The object’s two components include a ‘bird-pillar basin’ (the bird placed atop a central pillar) and a lidless ‘cylindrical vessel’. Wu argues that the vessel served to support the basin and that the composite object functioned as a water container in rituals. The ceramic examples display variation in a number of variables, including overall size, the type and posture of the bird (doves, ducks, eagles or hawks with contracted or extended wings), surface decoration (incised and painted), color (gray and burnished black) and the number and shape of holes in the supporting vessel. Wu reviews the many factors which likely guided the complex trajectories which these artifacts followed over space and time. Such factors included interregional interaction, traditions in craftsmanship, element recombination, technical skill, ‘unconscious’ alteration and agency, the latter in full evidence in the case of a bronze bird-pillar basin and cylindrical vessel recovered from the tomb of King Cuo of Zhongshan. According to Wu, the most conspicuous features of these two bronzes (large size; careful rendering of detail; bird of prey clutching a snake; turtle supporting the pillar; ring handles added to both the basin and vessel) highlight their distinctiveness from typological prototypes,

along with their undoubted functions as markers of royal power. Interestingly, the basin and vessel found in King Cuo's tomb were likely made at different times and did not in fact work as components of a composite artifact, indicating that the two elements had in this case traveled along independent trajectories and been 'decoupled' from one another.

Sheri Lullo ([chapter 7](#)) considers the placement of toilet boxes and their contents (implements of beautification and personal items) in graves dating from the Warring States to the Han period. As others have before, Lullo argues that daily life objects play a funerary role beyond marking social status and anticipating the future needs of the deceased. As items once intimately linked to individuals, personal objects – including toiletries – evoke powerful emotions in grieving mourners and shape how the deceased individual is remembered. The 'life histories' of toilet boxes can be viewed from different perspectives. First, while full biographies of individual boxes cannot be reconstructed, their decoration and contents do at least point to earlier uses as singularized items in the life of the deceased. Second, socio-political transformations are seen to guide the trajectory of the 'object type' itself. Toilet boxes first appear alongside other daily life objects in late Zhou graves, a contrast with an earlier focus on the burial of ritual bronzes which some have interpreted as reflecting a collapse of codified systems used to indicate rank. Furthermore, the toilet boxes were usually placed (alongside other common objects) between the inner and outer coffin, an activity carried out during the second (and more public) phase of the funeral. In contrast, beginning in the Qin dynasty, toilet boxes were sometimes placed in the inner coffin itself, so that 'their life history changed more acutely as they became items charged with the potential to elicit grief' in those relatives tasked with preparing the body and closing the coffin.

Leslie Wallace ([chapter 8](#)) focuses her attention on the 'lineage' of the 'mounted archer motif' during the Qin and Han periods, arguing that in contrast to object types, images can easily 'jump' between (and among) static and portable objects. During the period in question, the motif appears on bricks, murals, mirrors, bronze chariot ornaments, toiletry cases, ceramic jars and the door lintels of stone tombs. Rather than focusing on stylistic developments, Wallace considers the motif's temporal trajectory along a number of other paths. She discusses changes in the range of media on which it is found (an initial increase, ending with its mostly restricted use on tomb lintels), its geographical dispersal (a gradual expansion following the Qin, ending with its limited use in northern Shaanxi) and socio-political associations (from elite to broader accessibility, followed by its restricted use in non-elite funerary contexts). Such changes, she proposes, can be understood within the context of political, military and social developments. Thus, antagonistic interaction with the nomadic Xiongnu to the north helps explain the initial appeal of the motif's equestrian and martial elements, while its subsequent geographic and socio-economic

expansion is understood in light of Han military victories. By the second century CE, diminished threats from nomadic populations brought about the reduced military importance of northwestern areas, which itself may account for the restricted use – in northern Shaanxi – of the mounted archer motif on the door lintels of tombs belonging to low- and mid-level rank occupants, individuals whose traditional martial path to power was now blocked and whose cultural references harked to a bygone age of military prowess.

In her review of bi discs in pre-Han and Western Han China, Eileen Lam ([chapter 9](#)) argues that a careful analysis of the artifact's temporal development reveals its complex lineage, a finding which extends our understanding of these objects beyond the customary association made between the disc form and jade. Lam's study uncovers not only regional variation in the trajectories followed by bi discs, but also an occasional decoupling of form and material. Although pre-Han bi discs are best known as jades found in late Neolithic burials of the Liangzhu culture, early bi discs made of other materials (talc, glass, ceramic) have also been recovered from non-elite graves, with Lam pointing to talc and glass as readily available and visually similar jade substitutes. The Western Han period witnessed an increase in the number of both jade and non-jade discs placed in commoner and elite graves. Western Han non-jade discs, most of these found in southern and eastern China, were made of a greater range of materials (which now also included bronze, wood, lacquer and ivory) and tended to be placed away from the body in elite tombs (the location most closely associated with jade discs). According to Lam, the recorded perception of jade as a material with empowering capabilities (including the promotion of immortality) helps explains the placement of jade bi discs alongside non-jade discs (thus increasing the latter's effectiveness) and their fragmentation into pieces used to make funerary suits. Importantly, such decoupling of form and material is also evident in Lady Dai's tomb, which contained no jade bi discs but was instead decorated with varied depictions of bi discs.

In her chapter on aboriginal objects from Taiwan, Hui Du ([chapter 10](#)) charts their trajectory (as a group) through museum exhibits dating between 1895 and 1980. She records the objects' life histories as they experienced politically and ideologically driven processes of re-contextualization along parallel but dissimilar paths in Taiwan and on the mainland. Du views the museum as a contested space and power discourse that constructs the 'new lives' of objects. During the Japanese occupation of Taiwan (1895–1945), exhibits of aboriginal materials aimed to highlight Japan's ability to administer Taiwan (through its classification of aboriginal groups), the correctness of its 'civilizing mission' (by illustrating the 'backwardness' of aborigines), Taiwan's cultural connection with the South China Seas (justifying Japan's further military expansion) and the strength of earlier links between Japan and Taiwan. In contrast, mainland exhibits dating to this period aimed to break the academic monopoly of

Japan on Taiwan and mark Taiwan's aboriginal population as one of China's borderland ethnic groups. The period from Japan's defeat (1945) to the take-over of the island by the Nationalists (1949) witnessed attempts to erase the Japanese colonial narrative from exhibits in Taiwan, along with the movement (in both directions) of aboriginal objects across the Taiwan Strait for the purpose of highlighting the integration of Taiwan into China. Divergent trajectories reemerged between 1949 and 1980, with mainland exhibits identifying Taiwan's aborigines as 'Gaoshan', one of the fifty-six Chinese nationalities making up its multi-ethnic fabric. In contrast, museum exhibits in Taiwan de-emphasized the island's early links with the mainland, choosing instead to focus on Taiwan's traditional cultural orientation toward the Austronesian world of Southeast Asia.

In the volume's final chapter, Katheryn Linduff ([chapter 11](#)) considers the practice of referencing the past through the acquisition and display of objects meant to 'invoke the aura and authority of the ancient'. She reviews salient instances of this practice over the course of Chinese history, whereby ancient objects – or copies of such – supported claims to illustrious cultural genealogies, engendered familiarity with earlier times or were used as powerful props in nativist movements. Importantly, this could be achieved in different ways. Thus, the Shang dynasty tomb of Lady Hao at Anyang contained both original Neolithic jades and Shang period jades modeled on these earlier objects. In contrast, jades recovered from Han dynasty elite tombs include a 'box' carved out of a Neolithic cong tube, as well as a cong set into a three-footed silver stand, examples which alert us to the role that both form and material played in referencing the past. In her discussion of the rediscovery and publication by Song scholars of early dynastic bronze vessels, Linduff considers the role which such objects would have played as counterpoints to foreign artistic and cultural elements in China, as well as in the emergence of a literati culture whose access to such bronzes substantiated their intellectual and cultural links to a glorious Confucian past. Significantly, Song, Ming and Qing dynasty copies of these bronzes also reflected current fashions, including design features (e.g. inlaid decoration) and uses (e.g. incense burners and flower pots), revealing here again the power of form and material over strict adherence to authenticity.

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Yan Sun

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ONE

MEMORY, AMNESIA AND THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY SYMBOLS IN CHINA

Gideon Shelach-Lavi

“Objects bring back their memories. You tear my heart.”¹

Fascination with memory and the way knowledge and ideas are remembered and transmitted from person to person and from generation to generation is not new. People have always been fascinated with the ability to know about things that happened a long time ago and to preserve the memory of things they themselves have witnessed for future generations. In the Jewish tradition, “Zekhor” (זכור “remember”) is one of the most important commandments (Yerushalmi 1982), and a strong emphasis on remembering, though not always presented in religious terms, is found in almost every culture, including in China (Schwarcz 1998). Today, historians and social scientists are no less interested in the subject, though their attention has shifted to the way that memories are shaped, manipulated and even invented (e.g. Anderson 1983; Connerton 1989; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Mendels 2004). In other words, rather than the memories themselves, they emphasize the social context of memory. Archaeologists have also made a contribution to this interest in the unique materialistic dimensions of “social memory.” They discuss such issues as the materialization of ideas and social norms and how memory is embedded in artifacts such that the objects themselves take on the role of social agents (e.g. DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle 1996; Gosden and Marshall, 1999; Mills and Walker, 2008; Yoffee 2007).

While this modern scholarship is sophisticated in appreciating the complexity of the processes of memory formation, transmission and transformation,

in one respect it remains quite naive: the assumption that such processes are continuous. In other words, it is assumed that once a social memory has been formed it may undergo fundamental changes, but that there will always be something there to be transmitted through time and space, or else the memory will be lost. In this chapter, I challenge this idea and argue instead that memories may disappear for a long period of time before they are rediscovered or resurface. Moreover, I argue that such ‘hiatus’ periods are often crucial for social processes because they facilitate the manipulation of memory and the imbuing of artifacts and symbols with powerful new meanings.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The background for my research is the current consensus among historians and archaeologists of China, which I have elsewhere called the “continuity paradigm” (Shelach 2004: 20–3). Such a view assumes that the “seeds” of Chinese habits, traditions, religious beliefs and symbols appeared among Neolithic cultures (seventh to third millennia BCE) in different regions of China, and evolved and came together to form a shared Chinese culture during the Bronze Age (second and first millennia BCE). The creation of a Chinese culture – or “civilization” – is described as the slow accumulation of traits and the gradual integration of regional societies. This model is often coined in genealogical, or even genetic, terms. It was articulated in an extremely influential paper by the eminent archaeologist Su Bingqi (1987), and has since become one of the main preoccupations of Chinese archaeology (for recent discussions see Chen 2009; Fan 2008; Xu 2009).

This paradigm has only taken root during the last thirty years. Before the political reforms that followed the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the prevailing paradigm was a combination of Marxist ideology and conservative Han nationalism. In historic terms this was a paradigm of “rupture,” emphasizing the progressive, sometimes revolutionary, replacement of primitive social-evolutionary stages by more advanced stages (Shelach 2004: 13–19; Tong 1989). In this respect, the abandonment of the Marxist paradigm and the adaptation of the “continuity” model was a return to the traditional concept of the Chinese classics (Falkenhausen 1993; Shelach 2004: 20). Such a view is well suited to the prevailing nationalistic sentiments in China as well as to the cultivation of inclusive national pride in an era of globalization (Liu 2004: 8–9).

The geographical components of the paradigm underwent a somewhat different transformation: from an exclusive to an inclusive view. Until the 1980s, the central Yellow River basin was seen as the “cradle of Chinese civilization,” from which Chinese culture gradually spread to other parts of present-day China (e.g. Cheng 1978: 7). This intellectual trend can be attributed to the

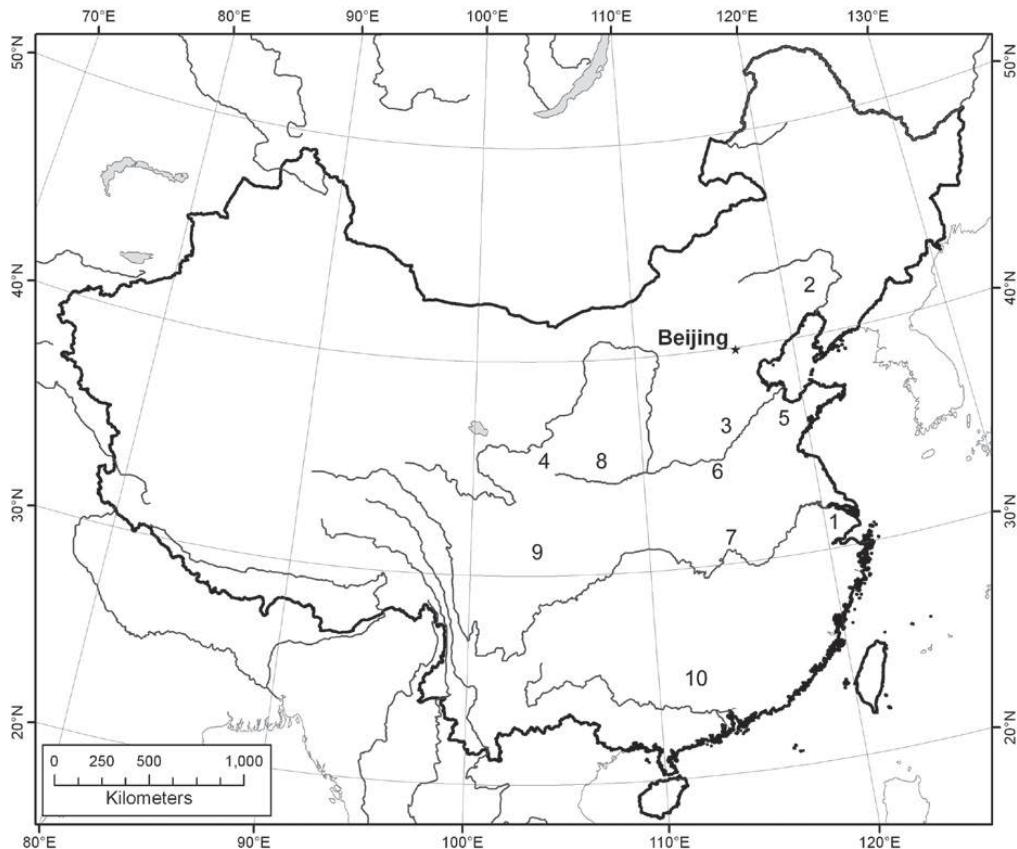
political atmosphere in China during the height of the Communist regime (Tong 1995), as well as to reactions against previous Eurocentric models that described the development of the Chinese civilization as a derivative process of diffusion from Western civilizations (Li 2003: 5). During the past twenty-five years scholars working both in China (Su 1987; Su and Yin 1981) and in North America (Chang 1986: 234–51) have abandoned this “out of the Yellow River” model. Chang, himself a former proponent of the centralist model, has since advocated a model that he terms the “Chinese Interaction Sphere,” arguing that the dominant mechanism that catalyzed the development of Chinese civilization was contact between different regional Neolithic cultures. First viewed as heterodoxy, the new model has since been almost unanimously accepted by sinologists and archaeologists. This rapid paradigmatic shift should be understood in the context of the tremendous surge in archaeological discoveries in areas previously considered peripheral by Chinese archaeologists. These discoveries have highlighted the early development and unique features of many local cultures. Utilized to create local tourist attractions and to boost local pride, these new discoveries tended not to be used as emblems of separatism, but rather to emphasize the importance of local contributions to the development of a Chinese culture (Falkenhausen 1995; Liu 2004: 7–8; Shelach 2015: 337–40).

Today, uninterrupted continuity over millennia and the integration of extensive regions are two of the most salient features commonly attributed to the Chinese civilization. Even some of the most vocal critics of Chinese historical myths tend to agree that these characteristics are key factors in the development of the social, political, economic and intellectual history of China (e.g. Huang 1997: 3–22; Loewe 1999). Yet while the mechanisms that shaped these processes during the imperial era have been extensively addressed, earlier stages have not been sufficiently researched. Although many studies claim to have identified the origins of Chinese civilization, only very few deal with the specific mechanisms and contexts of interaction through time and space, or ask how the basic features of Chinese identity were transmitted.² None, to my knowledge, discusses the issue on which this chapter is focused: the indirect transmission of memories through rediscovery of forgotten symbols and ways of expression.

The scholarly tendency to eschew meta-questions about the early stages of the shaping of Chinese identity is not accidental. Rather, it reflects the reservations of most scholars, especially those working outside of China, regarding problematic concepts such as “Chinese culture.” Cultures, especially “national cultures,” are seen as vaguely defined entities, recently invented and manipulated for socio-political purposes (Anderson 1983; Eisenstadt and Giesen 1995; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Sokefeld 1999). Indeed, the search

for national attributes in the archaeological and historical record is associated with modern nationalist chauvinism (Kohl and Fawcett 1995). More concretely, any serious research would not fail to note that in the area we now call China, self-identification with a shared multi-regional identity came relatively late. It was only during the Western Zhou period (1047–771 BCE) that the Zhou elite came to exhibit what may be seen as symbols of a shared identity. Literal references to shared identity, in terms such as Xia or Hua, Hua Xia and zhu Xia (夏, 華, 華夏, 諸夏) first appeared during the eighth century BCE, and it took many centuries for this kind of collective identity to spread to wider segments of the population (Falkenhausen 2006: 166 and 402). A common identity was finally canonized after the imperial unification in 221 BCE, when the political borders of the Chinese empire were clearly demarcated and the cultural dichotomy between the Chinese and their neighbors, especially the mobile pastoralists of the steppe, was highly emphasized (Di Cosmo, 2002; Pines 2005: 90–1; Poo 2005). Even so, the process of identity formation and the dissemination of a Chinese identity to new regions and wider segments of the population continued throughout the imperial era and well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

My research has no quarrel with arguments such as these, but maintains that regional and trans-regional identities in China were constructed from preexisting symbols, habits and traditions. The building blocks for these identities were taken, sometimes literally, from earlier societies of the Neolithic and Bronze Age that flourished in different regions of what would later become China. This perspective shifts our attention to issues that are often assumed but rarely explicitly addressed. These issues include the relationship between prehistoric and historic societies in China and the process of regional and interregional integration that ultimately led to the formation of a shared identity. Thus, the research question at the heart of this research is how, through interactions and transmissions, people created the elements of what later became “Chinese culture.” To make such a question operative I attempt to deconstruct vague notions such as “culture,” and “historic memory,” and to focus on specific questions about the mechanisms and socio-political contexts and consequences of transmission across time and space. Among the questions that I think we need to address are: What were the mechanisms by which cultural traits (symbols, rituals, habits, structures, etc.) were transmitted? What is the place of material artifacts in such mechanisms? What was the process by which a foreign trait (from a spatially or temporally distant society) was accepted into the receiving society and manipulated by different groups within it? In what ways were the meanings of cultural traits altered by the processes of transmission? Not all of those questions are directly addressed in this short chapter, though they may be hinted at. Of special interest to this research is



1.1. Sites and archaeological cultures mentioned in the text: 1. Liangzhu culture; 2. Hongshan culture; 3. Yinxu (late Shang center) and Fu Hao grave; 4. Banshan (Gansu); 5. Longshan culture; 6. Erlitou; 7. Panlongcheng; 8. Fengchu; 9. Jinsha; 10. Shixia. (Map by author.)

the place of “amnesia” – i.e. ruptures in time and space – in the process of identity formation: How did such discontinuities enable the societies or individuals that rediscovered ancient or foreign artifacts to imbue them with new meanings and use them in significant ways for identity construction?

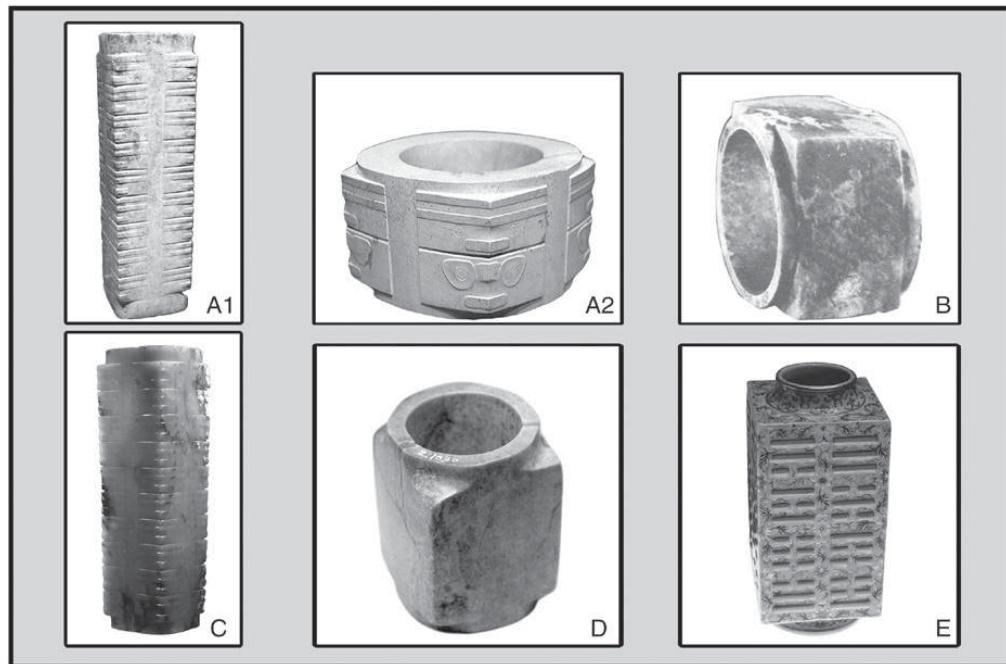
THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT PARADIGM

A recent survey counted more than 800 publications on the origins of Chinese civilization by members of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Chen 2009). However, despite this intensive research, many of the fundamental aspects of interaction and transmission in time and space are poorly understood and rarely addressed. I argue that while the new paradigm – that of “continuity” – has advantages over the old “rupture” model in that it acknowledges the importance of such interactions, it nonetheless incorporates views that take the process of transmission and integration for granted. Because

transmission from earlier to later societies is seen as a natural, almost biological, phenomenon, scholars tend to project back our knowledge from historic to prehistoric periods.

This method is exemplified by K. C. Chang's famous paper, *An Essay on Cong*, in which he discusses tabular jade artifacts found in graves of the Liangzhu culture (良渚 ca. 3300–2100 BCE) of the lower Yangzi River basin (Figure 1.2A). Following traditional Chinese antiquarian scholarship, Chang identifies those objects with the term *cong* (琮) in the classical texts of the Eastern Zhou (771–221 BCE) and the Han (206 BCE–220 CE) period, and uses this information to explain the meanings ascribed to those objects and the way they were ritually used during the prehistoric era. Especially noted is the interpretation of the square exterior of the “cong” and their round inside shaft as symbolizing a cosmological perception of “round heaven and square earth.” He thus identifies the Liangzhu “cong” as ritualistic instruments that serve to unify heaven and earth (Chang 1989a: 38). This kind of backward projection assumes immense ideological stability during times of tremendous socio-political and economic change, as well as the direct transmission of a symbolic representation over more than two millennia and across a very large region. Similar assumptions are implicit in much recent research (e.g. Allan 1991; Childs-Johnson 1995; Li 2004; Xu 2009).

In the same manner, transmission across space and interregional integration are not problematized but rather are seen as natural and continuous phenomena. Thus, while the founding fathers of the multi-regionalist paradigm – the eminent archaeologists Su Bingqi and K. C. Chang – described an important phenomenon, they did not address the mechanisms involved or the socio-political contexts in which it occurred. In some notable examples, research has adopted a much more sophisticated methodology and acknowledges the heterogeneous nature of interactions (e.g. Allard 1997; Falkenhausen 2003; Flad 2008; Huang 1992), and the scope of such interactions has been expanded beyond the present borders of China (e.g. Li 2002; Rawson 2008; Shelach 2009: 114–45). However, there is still no comprehensive analytical framework for addressing these issues. While some describe such interactions in terms of exchange networks in raw materials and finished objects (e.g. Liu 2003; Peng and Zhu 1995), other types of interactions by which artifacts and ideas could have been transmitted, and the contexts of such transmission and adaptation of ideas into the receiving societies, are rarely addressed. There are only a few serious studies of the ways in which foreign artifacts catalyzed local change and were used to construct local identity (e.g. Falkenhausen 2003; Rawson 2008: 36; Shelach 2009: 143–5). Moreover, systematic research rarely transcends the confines of a specific region, period or type of artifact.



1.2. A1 and A2. Jade cong of the Liangzhu culture, Shanghai Museum Jade Gallery (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@N08/10181860205/in/album-72157636378_376533/).

B. Jade cong from the Fuhao grave, Tomb of Fuhao, Henan province (Zhongguo, shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中国社会科学院考古研究所 1980. *Yinxu Fuhao mu* 殷墟妇好墓 [The Fuhao Grave of Yin Xu]. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, Figure 81.3).

C. Jade cong of the Liangzhu type from Jinsha, Sichuan province, Jinsha site museum, Chengdu Sichuan (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@N08/13922008246/in/album-72157644168570264/).

D. Jade cong of the Western Zhou period, National Museum, Beijing, Jade Gallery (www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@N08/9845579565/in/album-72157635705300195/).

E. Porcelain cong of the Qing dynasty, National Museum, Beijing, Porcelain Gallery (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@N08/9836360564/in/album-72157635688526916/).

A NEW THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF INTERACTIONS IN TIME AND SPACE

One of the drawbacks of current research on the construction and transmission of social memory during the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods in China is that it is almost completely divorced from any theoretical framework. I propose that such a framework should be built upon and address three theoretical fields: 1. Identity formation and maintenance; 2. Social memory and amnesia; and 3. Materiality and the biography of artifacts. I argue that the third field enables the integration of the first two and makes them research-operative. Materiality is also the link between the two spheres of interaction, namely,

time and space. In recent years, scholars in the humanities and social sciences have recognized the importance of artifacts and material culture in social interactions (e.g. Forty and Kuchler 1999; Graves-Brown 2000; Kieschnick, 2003; Miller 2005; Rao 2008; Toren 1999). According to Cohen (1985: 15), symbols are not merely indicators of group membership that help to demarcate its boundaries, but are actually the very means through which members of society are able to think about such identities. In this context, materialization is more than just the expression and externalization of existing social relations in artifacts. Instead, through processes of material construction and the manipulation of artifacts in daily use and during rituals, it also enables such relations to be embodied and new ones to be constructed (Connerton 1989: 2–6; DeMarrais et al. 1996; DeMarrais 2004; Jenkins 1996: 104–18, 131; Palmer 1998; Robb 1998; Upton 1996).

Such processes are closely linked to interactions and transmission across time and space. One of the salient features of ethnic or ethnic-like identity in current and past societies is that members tend to trace their social affiliation to shared, usually ancient, origins (Brumfiel 1994: 89; Eisenstadt and Giesen 1995: 77–80; Emberling 1997: 301–5; Vermeulen and Govers 1994: 3). In most cases, such affiliation and the historic memory it assumes, even if it is a recent fabrication, are strongly embodied and symbolized in material expressions (Bradley 2003; Connerton 1989: 10–13 and 41–5; DeMarrais 2004: 13; Meskell 2007; Mills and Walker 2008; Trevor-Roper 1983; Yoffee 2007). In a very similar way, materialization is also crucial for interaction and transmission in space (Barth 1969; Cohen 1985: 19; Yoffee 2007: 3). “Exotic” materials or artifacts that are associated with long-distant interactions are often used to construct and demarcate local identities, be they more “egalitarian” ethnic-like identities or more restricted identities, such as belonging to a political or economic elite (e.g. Bentley 2005; Eicher and Erekosima 1995; Shelach 2009: 143–5; Wells 1998; Wobst 1977).

This approach, which sees artifacts and materials as agents of transmission, is related to the “social life of objects” approach (Appadurai, 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Kopytoff 1986; Mills and Walker 2008: 11–12). Charting the life trajectory of an artifact from its production, through the pedigree of ownership over it and the “experiences” it undergoes, to the context of its final deposition, can teach us much about the social meanings embedded in it. This approach can be extended to processes such as the copying of artifacts and the interpretation of one type of artifact by means of another type, made, for example, from different raw materials, or at different scale, or by using different techniques. Reinterpreting through copying is a potent transformative process that is often associated with transmission through time and space (e.g. Huang 1992; and see more examples below). At the same time, we should note that objects are never completely reinvented *de novo*. When they are used

in different contexts or as templates for later reproductions, artifacts still carry with them sediments of their past, such as the techniques used to produce them and their innate qualities (their shape, the way they feel, the way they reflect light etc.). Even the ways in which an artifact may be used are, at least to a certain extent, predetermined by its qualities (Mills and Walker 2008: 12; Renfrew 2004: 29).

This unique quality of artifacts – that they can be imbued with different meanings while at the same time having certain constant and unchangeable qualities – is closely related to an important and relatively novel aspect of my theoretical framework: the attention paid to processes of forgetting (or amnesia) and discontinuity. While historians are no longer naive about classic or current claims for the ancient ancestry of any culture or tradition, they usually assume a direct transmission from the time a new tradition is invented throughout its developmental trajectory. There has been little research on processes of forgetting and on how disembodied sediments from the past are used by later societies (but see for example Schwarcz 2008).

Many would agree that “artfully selective oblivion is necessary to all societies” (Lowenthal 1999: xii) because, for individuals and societies, without selection there can be no generalization. Moreover, societies sometimes need to forget or even actively erase the past in order to reshape or reinvent it (Bradley 2003: 224; Flower 2006; Meskell 2007: 221–3; Mills 2008). My claim here, though, is somewhat different: I argue that the process of forgetting and rediscovering, through material culture, can be a very potent nexus for reinventing the past (or a foreign land for that matter), and imbuing it with new meanings. At the same time, the artifacts thus rediscovered retain some of their original qualities and, by extension, an authentic connection to the past. The past, in this respect, even if forgotten, can be said to shape the present even as it is being shaped by it.

Another perspective that should be incorporated in our theoretical framework has to do with the multi-linearity of transmission processes. Because it projects backwards the “Chinese” norms of the imperial era in an attempt to locate their prehistoric “seeds,” much of the research done under the continuity paradigm contains an implicit unilinear assumption. An interesting lesson can be learned here from the work of historians of technology on the complexity and social dependency of technological change and inventions and on the multi-linearity of such processes. What in retrospect seems to be a linear progression from a prototype, through experiments and improvements, to the accepted model, is in most cases a much more variable process full of half-developed technologies, forgotten inventions and parallel lines of change (Pinch and Bijker 1987). We should attempt to follow the systematic approach outlined by Pinch and Bijker by taking into account the full range of possibilities that existed in the past, as well as by paying attention to the historic and

social context of change, to the social groups responsible for the acceptance or rejection of the different models and to the ways such models embodied social relations and identities.

PRELIMINARY CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

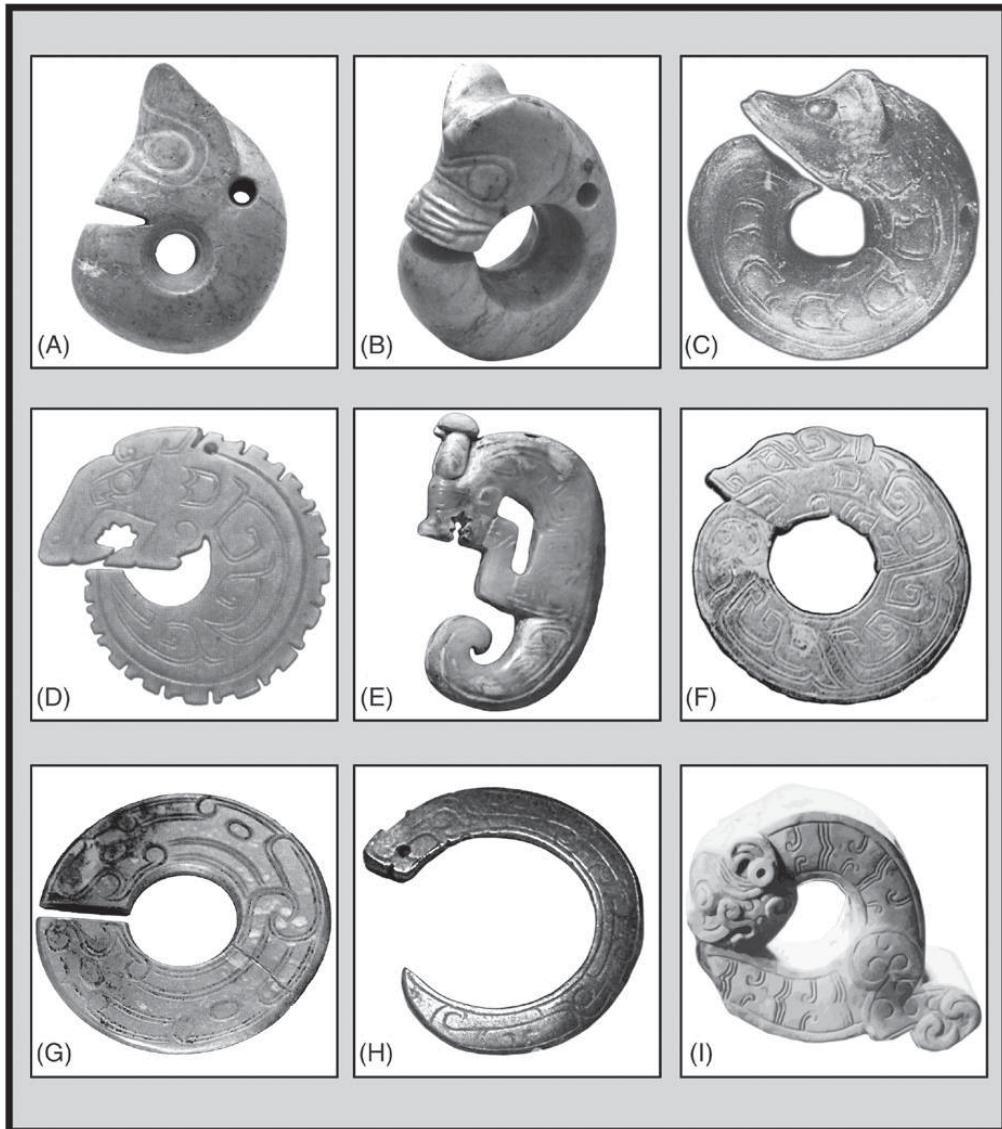
Jade artifacts, perhaps because of their durability, provide some of the best examples of the type of transmission processes described above. Archaeologists and art historians have proposed that there was a “Jade Age” in China between the Stone and the Bronze Ages (Chang 1986: 8–9; Dematte 2006; Yang 2005). While many have rejected this notion and its utility (e.g. Rawson 1995), this model illustrates the fact that, starting from the sixth millennium BCE, jade production developed and became widespread throughout different regions of China. Such regional proliferation represents the interregional exchange of raw materials (Liu 2003: 4–16; but see Wen and Jing 1997 for evidence to the contrary). Of even greater significance may be the apparent dissemination of jade technology from one or a few regions in which it is known from the sixth and fifth millennia BCE (e.g. the Northeast: Zhongguo 1997; the Lower Yangzi: Wen and Jing 1997) to other regions in which it is known only during the fourth millennium (e.g. inland southern China: Allard 1997; Wen and Jing 1997: 113). Such a process represents an important transmission of knowledge across time and space. The model implicit in most studies of jade technology in China is that more sophisticated techniques gradually evolved and spread to more and more regions (e.g. Dematte 2006). How such knowledge was transmitted and subsequently integrated into the local context and transformed by it is a topic which has received little attention. Looking at specific case studies associated with such transmission is crucial for addressing such questions as how the technology of jade production, jade artifacts (foreign or local imitations) and the symbols they bore were used to create and enhance local identities.

The shape of the non-utilitarian jade artifacts and their placement inside graves in close proximity to the body of the deceased suggest that spiritualistic ideas were embedded in jade artifacts used in rituals, but also that jade, especially when used to make ornaments, became a favored material through which to express personal and group identities among societies in different parts of China. Such perceptions of jade are well attested to in the written records and material culture of the Zhou period (1056–221 BCE) and the early imperial era (221 BCE to 220 CE) (Chang 1989a; Li 2004; Shelach 2015). However, when the resolution of our observation is more sharply focused on defined examples, it becomes clear that what at the lower resolution seems like an almost biological process of diffusion and evolution was actually a much less continuous process. For example, circular reptile-like jade objects of the

Hongshan culture (紅山 ca. 4500–3000 BCE) from northeast China are said to have inspired similar objects known from the Yellow River basin during the second and first millennia BCE (Figures 1.3A and 1.3B). It is also argued that the culturally significant symbol of the dragon evolved from such models (Shelach 2001b). The accepted trajectory for the development of this type of (circular or semi-circular) dragon symbol is unilinear: development in the northeast (ca. fifth and fourth millennia) → transmission to the Yellow River area and the evolution of more complex artistic descriptions and pictographic written characters (ca. second millennium BCE) → spread to other parts of China (ca. first millennium BCE) → canonization of the symbol (late first millennium BCE and early first millennium CE) (Figure 1.3). However, the important stage of transformation from the northeast to the Yellow River basin and the evolution from a vague motif to that of a mythological animal is, in fact, missing. No finds are dated to the third millennium BCE, and the clearest links between the northeast tradition and that of the Yellow River region are a few artifacts found in the famous Fuhao (婦好) grave in Anyang (Henan) that are dated to ca. 1200 BCE (Zhongguo 1980: 129; see Figures 1.3C and 1.3D). Based on stylistic analysis, it seems that while some of these are local imitations, others are original Hongshan artifacts found in a context that is 1000 km and 2000 years away from the time and place of their manufacture and original use.

A hypothetical scenario suggests that the original symbolic expression was part of what we define now as the Hongshan, but that it was discontinued and forgotten. The more durable expressions of it, carved in jade, were rediscovered during the second millennium and brought to the Shang polity in the Yellow River area. Assuming, correctly I think, that the artifacts found at the Fuhao grave are not simply mortuary offerings, but rather artifacts that were owned and used by the deceased during her lifetime, we can suggest that the original Hongshan artifacts thus rediscovered were manipulated and copied in the context of the Shang polity and then reburied, perhaps as heirlooms, in ritualistic elite contexts such as the Fuhao grave. While the low quality of the illustrations provided by the excavation report of the Fuhao grave prevents a thorough analysis of the artifacts themselves, it seems that typical Shang motifs were incised on the Hongshan artifacts (Figure 1.4). Incising Shang motifs on the smooth surface of Hongshan artifacts is a very telling illustration of a process of appropriation of ancient artifacts by the Shang and could show how Shang ideology was literally inscribed on, and into, them.

This scenario lends itself to research into the importance of forgetting and rediscovery in the transformation of forms and meaning. Was the creation of a powerful symbol of identity made possible because the original meanings were lost, and because of the prestige given to artifacts whose origins are lost in distant space and time? Was the ritualistic reburial of the Hongshan artifacts an act that allowed for the invention and transformation of what we now



I.3. A. Jade “dragons” of the Hongshan culture, National Museum, Beijing, Jade Gallery (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@N08/9845737695/in/album-72157635705300195/).

B. Hongshan culture jade pig dragon. Hongshan Culture Gallery, Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot, China (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@N08/19204897893/in/album-72157655619356548/).

C. D. Jades from the Fuhao grave (C, probably a Hongshan artifact, and D, local production) (Zhongguo, shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中国社会科学院考古研究所 1980. *Yinxu Fuhao mu 殷墟妇好墓* [The Fuhao Grave of Yinxu]. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, Figure 105.1, Color Figure 16.3).

E. Late Shang jade pendant, Jade Gallery, Aurora Museum, Pudong, Shanghai. (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@N08/22441486942/in/album-721576 60281360482/).

F. A late Shang or Western Zhou jade ornament (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@N08/22441486942/in/album-72157660281360482/).

(continued)



1.4. Comparison of the decorations incised on the jade “dragon” from the tomb of Fuhao, Henan province (Zhongguo, shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中国社会科学院考古研究所 1980. *Yinxu Fuhao mu* 殷墟妇好墓 [The Fuhao Grave of Yinxu]. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, Figure 105.1) (A) to the decorations of a Western Zhou *gong* (觥) vessel (B), Western Zhou Gallery, Henan Provincial Museum, Zhengzhou (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@No8/10343249284/in/album-72157636746200283/; www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@No8/10339444904/in/album-72157636746200283/).

know as the dragon symbol (for similar cases elsewhere, see, e.g., Mills 2008)? Forty (1999: 2) follows Connerton in arguing that “material objects have less significance in perpetuating memory than embodied acts, rituals and normative social behavior.” While it is clear that artifacts become socially meaningful through rituals and other manipulations, I would posit that the above example suggests that the artifacts themselves are playing a role that is akin to social agency.

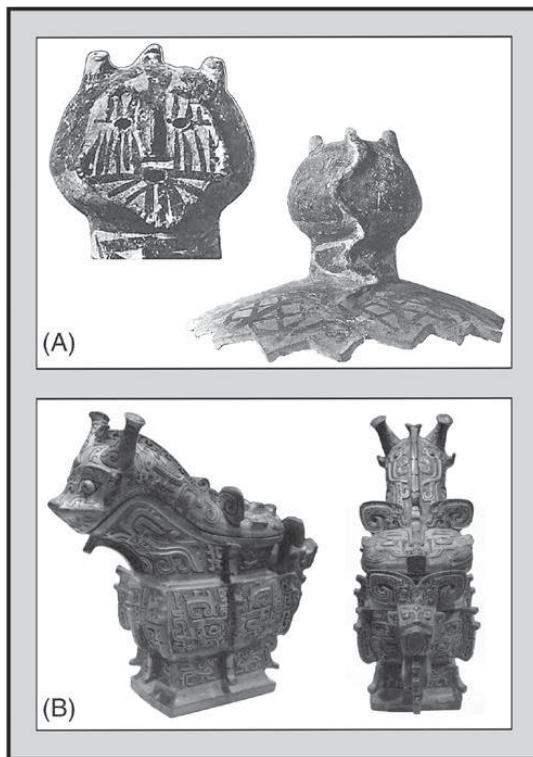
1.3 (continued)

G. H. Western Zhou jade ornaments, Research Exhibition Hall, Jade Gallery, Aurora Museum, Pudong, Shanghai (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@No8/22269020608/in/album-72157660281360482/).

I. Ceramic model for bell suspension loop, Spring and Autumn period, Houma Foundry, Shanxi province (after Xiating, L. and L. Ziming, *The Art of the Houma Foundry*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996. Rendered in Adobe Illustrator).

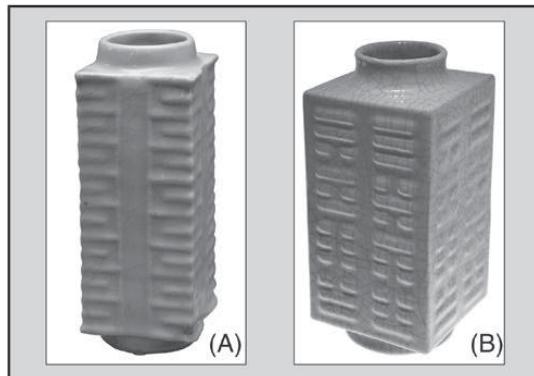
A similar case of rediscovery, appropriation and reinterpretation may be seen in the association between mythological animals in the sculptural ceramics of Neolithic cultures from Northwest China and very similar appearances, this time in bronze, in the Yellow River basin during the Shang and the Zhou periods (Figure 1.5). I would argue that the similarities in the shape of the horns in the two cases presented in Figure 1.5, and indeed on many depictions of Shang and Western Zhou art, cannot be accidental. More striking, however, is the combination of the two horns with a snake that is turned into a mane. While in this case study we do not have clear tangible evidence of northwestern Neolithic ceramics in the context of the Shang, the general trajectory is very similar to the one described above for the Hongshan jades. As in the case of the Hongshan jades, the trajectory of development from the ceramics of Northwest China to the bronzes of the Yellow River area contains a hiatus of some 1000 km and 1000 years, in which no “intermediate” forms are to be found.

Another, very similar example is the transformation and dissemination of the cong³ jades discussed above. This is a more complex example because Liangzhu cong jades were already widely distributed during the Neolithic period, some of them found in distant locations far from the place of their supposed manufacture. Therefore, as early as the Neolithic period we can discuss the appropriation of the cong jades into foreign cultural contexts and their being imbued with new meaning through local usages and being locally copied in different media (e.g. Allard 1997; Huang 1992; Falkenhausen 2003: 199–203; Priewe, chapter 3 this volume) (Figure 1.2). However, as in the case of the Hongshan jade, there seems to be a temporal gap between the time of the production of the Neolithic cong jades and the reemergence of the cong during the Shang. A large Liangzhu cong found in Jinsha (Figure 1.2C),



1.5. A. Neolithic ceramic lid from Banshan, Gansu (Photo from: Andersson, J. G., 1943. “Researches into the Prehistory of the Chinese”, *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, 15, plate 187. Publication is in the public domain).

B. Western Zhou bronze gong, Luoyang, 1050–975 BC, Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@N08/10434338775).



1.6. A. Ming or Qing dynasty porcelain “cong,” Pottery and Porcelain Gallery, Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@No8/38923507052/in/album-72157663488137798/)

B. Qing dynasty (Qianlong era) porcelain cong decorated with the eight trigrams (*bagua* 八卦), Porcelain Gallery, Hebei Museum, Shijiazhuang (Photo by Gary Todd: www.flickr.com/photos/101561334@No8/11864570624/in/album-72157639600328976/)

a site in Sichuan dated to ca. 1000 BCE, is suggestive of such processes in areas outside the Shang polity (Falkenhausen 2003: 199–202). However, the crucial evidence for such transmission comes, again, from the Fuhao grave, where no less than fourteen cong jades were found (Zhongguo 1980: 115–16 and plates 81–3), some of them probably of original Liangzhu origin and some of which may be Shang imitations. Contrary to Chang’s argument that the shape of the cong was a meaningful ritualistic emblem during the early imperial era (Chang 1989a), it seems that the unique Liangzhu design fell into oblivion once more after the Shang period (or early Western Zhou). Xia Nai (夏鼐)

observed that such artifacts are rare in Eastern Zhou contexts and are almost non-existent in sites and graves of the Han and later periods (Hsia 1986: 221),⁴ an observation that is still valid today (Sun 1990: 365–71). We find evidence that during the early imperial era Neolithic artifacts were rediscovered and reworked to serve new functions and embody the new imperial ideologies (Linduff, chapter 11 this volume). The cong shape was rediscovered once again by the collectors and antiquarians of the Song dynasty and was imitated during the Late Imperial era in different materials, such as porcelain and lacquer (Figures 1.2E and 1.6). Though this last transformation is beyond the scope of the current chapter, it seems that once again it acquired new meanings, as when its exterior was decorated with the eight trigrams (*bagua* 八卦) of the Yijing (易經), for example (Figure 1.6B).

Some scholars argue that the decorations inscribed on a few of the Liangzhu cong jades inspired the so-called “taotie” (饕餮) motif cast on bronze artifacts, which are dated to ca. 1400–900 BCE (e.g. Childs-Johnson 1995). While none of the Liangzhu cong found at the Fuhao grave is decorated with this “mask” motif, it is possible that such artifacts were found by the Shang. Be that as it may, I think that in the case of the cong the rediscovery of ancient artifacts, either the original Liangzhu jades or their Neolithic imitations, was an important nexus for the creation of a new tradition and the manipulation of memory. A similar trajectory, though perhaps more continuous during the imperial era, may be constructed for the so-called bi (璧) jade discs.

CONCLUSIONS

While the importance of forgetting in order to free space, so to speak, for other memories, to allow for generalizations or as an intentional political act to erase the memory of rivals, is well studied (e.g. Bradley 2003: 224; Flower 2006; Lowenthal 1999; Mills 2008: 81–2; Yoffee 2007: 6), few if any researchers have addressed the process of forgetting and rediscovering as an essential part of the creation and manipulation of memories. I think that the case studies presented above are suggestive as to the possible place of such processes in the creation, transmission and transformation of memory, especially among non-literate societies.⁵ My hypothesis that the rediscovery of a forgotten symbol is an important nexus, because it allows the discoverer (individual or society) to imbue new meanings into an object which, because of its antiquity, may possess an innate prestige, needs to be further investigated. The basis for such research must be the identification of case studies, like those presented above, and the comprehensive collection of all the available data pertaining to such features as the physical traits of the artifacts, the production techniques and the origins of the raw material used to make them, evidence for the history of their ownership and use and the archaeological context of their deposition. Such a large data set will enable the analysis of individual objects (or structures etc.) and the reconstruction of their “social biography,” as well as the visualization and analysis of distribution patterns of similar or related artifacts in time and space.

In addition to analysis aiming at the reconstruction of trajectories of transmission, including the rediscovery of artifacts, future research should pay special attention to the way that the material qualities of the ancient object – its shape, size, the materials it is made from etc. – determine the message that can be embedded in it. In other words, we should ask how the past determines, or at least sets the boundaries of possibilities, for the present and the future. To take the example of the cong: Did its combination of circle and square shape the latter cosmologic imagination in China? Did its shape, size and material determine the type of rituals in which it was used during the Bronze Age and the imperial era? On a more general level we should ask why certain societies, such as the Shang, are more open for the discovery and manipulation of ancient objects while others seem less interested in relics of the past. Is such interest typical for periods of rapid socio-political transformations?

Finally, we might wonder if there is anything typically “Chinese” about the processes described above. As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, many would like us to believe that “continuity” is one of the defining qualities of the Chinese civilization. As K. C. Chang (1989b: 161) wrote, “I refer to the Chinese pattern as one of *continuity* and the Western pattern as one of *rupture*. What may be seen as the most striking feature of ancient Chinese civilization

is that ideologically speaking it was created within a framework of cosmogonic holism.” It can be argued, therefore, that even if the actual line of transmission was broken, the special value attached to the ancient artifacts and their importance as carriers of ideological content is part of the Chinese reverence of the past and its holistic cosmogonic framework. I, however, do not subscribe to such a view. I think that types of reverence of the past exist in many societies and that the socio-psychological effects of the rediscovery of ancient remains are almost universal. A good example of such effects is the rediscovery of Greco-Roman sculptures during the Renaissance and the new values they came to symbolize. This is not to deny the importance of research carried out in China for the construction of new socio-cultural models. I completely agree with Chang (1989b) that the rich archaeological and historic data available from China can be used to test existing models as well as to formulate new ones. More than twenty years after the publication of Chang’s paper, the exploration of this rich data source to such an end has barely started, and we are yet to realize its great potential.

NOTES

- ¹ A commentary on an episode in Chapter 8 of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, made by a close friend of the author, who is known by the pseudonym “Red Inkstone” (Zhiyanzhai 脂硯齋). Translated in David Hawkes, *The Story of the Stone* (Penguin Classics), vol. 1, p. 34.
- ² Throughout this chapter, reference to “Chinese culture” or “Chinese identity” does not assume that it was universally accepted or was exactly similar for the entire population and did not change over time. I accept the position that identity is always prone to manipulations, is conceived differently by different people and is in constant flux (Jenkins 1996). I use phrases such as “Chinese culture” as shorthand for elements such as symbols, myth, technologies etc., which are used to create identities that are seen by significant segments of the population at the time as representing their shared identity.
- ³ As discussed above, calling those artifacts “cong” is an anachronistic projection of a term found in the classical texts on prehistoric objects. However, I use this and similar terms, such as “bi,” throughout this chapter because they are now accepted archaeological terminology.
- ⁴ Xia Nai, who was one of the leading proponents of the Marxist-based “rupture” paradigm, is therefore skeptical as to the association of the term “cong” of the late Zhou and Han text with the Neolithic and Bronze Age jade artifacts which we now call by that name (Hsia 1986: 220–2).
- ⁵ Research on oral history and memory suggests that they have a very short life span. As Bradley (2003: 221) says, “memories may become unstable within a surprisingly short space of time, although precise estimates vary between one hundred and two hundred years ... Memories become increasingly inaccurate until they are so corrupt that they can hardly be distinguished from myth.”

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TWO

THE LIVES OF SHOVELS, VESSELS, AND BELLS IN EARLY SOUTH CHINA: MEMORY, RITUAL, AND THE POWER OF DESTINATION

Francis Allard

The last decades have witnessed a significant increase in the number of ‘life history’ studies aimed at charting the temporal trajectories of individual objects (‘object biographies’) and types of objects (‘object lineages’). Guided by the notion that humans (prior to death) never cease interacting with objects in a dynamic way, such studies have attempted to chart the trajectories of individual objects (or types of objects), identifying in the process – and within the limitations of the available data – those transformational events that intermittently marked their complex lives (Gosden and Marshall 1999; Hoskins 1998; Joy 2009; Kopytoff 1986). Ranging widely in nature and impact, such transformations include, among others, changes in appearance, function (e.g. utilitarian vs. ritual), value (e.g. monetary vs. symbolic), and accessibility.

Although changes in an object’s function, meaning, or value over the course of its life can be deliberately driven by individuals – or groups of individuals – aiming to redefine its purpose to meet their own social and political needs, novel functions may also result from a loss of the object’s original purpose as a result of its extensive movement across time and/or space. Thus, an object’s sudden appearance in a distant cultural setting, or rediscovery following an extended period of time during which it remained out of view, offers its new owners flexibility in repurposing ‘exotic’-looking artifacts whose initial function may have been forgotten (or ‘lost’) (see chapter 1, this volume). This chapter considers more carefully this issue of ‘flexibility’ in regard to the repurposing of such objects. More specifically, I argue that the fate of single

objects traveling extensively through space and time does not present endless possibilities but is instead constrained by the features of the socio-political and cultural environment in which they are finally deposited and become part of the archaeological record.

As a way to illustrate this balance between the forces of possibility and constraint, I chart and compare the trajectories of different types of objects which moved (physically) through prehistoric Lingnan (岭南), a region in southern China which consists of the present-day provinces of Guangxi (广西) and Guangdong (广东). These include ‘stone shovels’ dating to the fourth–third millennia BCE, and elaborate bronze objects (vessels and bells) dated to the first millennium BCE. I propose that the shovels, bells, and vessels discussed in this chapter were produced in certain areas – where they played locally specific roles – and that some of them were carried along exchange systems of different types to different parts of Lingnan, where they were then reassigned new roles in altered rituals and/or as prestige goods. As such, although this study briefly comments on the production of copies of bronzes at the end of the first millennium BCE, its focus remains firmly on the trajectories of single objects (‘object biographies’), rather than on changes in object types (‘object lineages’).

As mentioned above, although the long-distance movement of objects traveling without their original function might suggest opportunities for highly flexible role reassessments at the local level, a number of constraints may in fact guide object trajectories and play a role in determining their final fate. A comparison of the life histories of stone shovels and bronzes reveals such constraints operating through a system of ‘nested practice’ characterized by two levels of behavioral specificity:

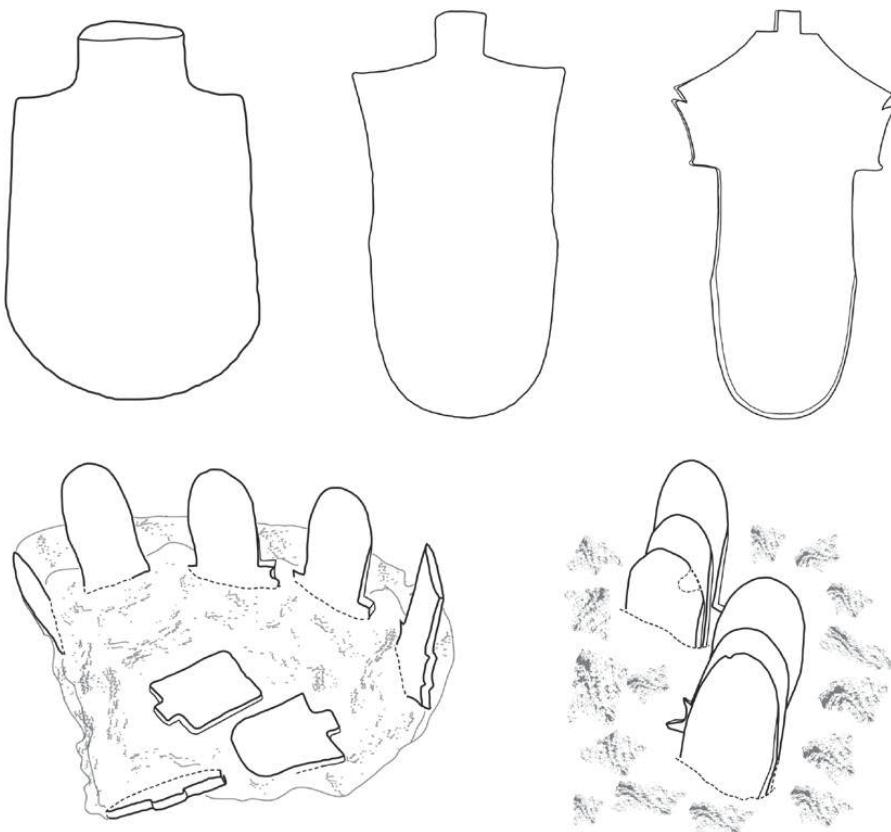
1. **The Socio-Political Context:** The dominant factor determining the fate of an object appears to have been the socio-political environment which served as the end point of its trajectory. More specifically, the level of complexity of the recipient society seems to have played an important role. Thus, those objects ending up in areas occupied by egalitarian societies – including all of the stone shovels and many of the bronzes discussed in this chapter – were mainly deposited in non-funerary settings. This is in contrast to those bronzes whose final destinations were areas marked by the presence of more complex social systems, in which case the objects were used instead as grave goods.
2. **Local Practice:** The specific fate and treatment of objects reflected local needs and customs, even as these operated within the broader behavioral parameters set by the socio-political environment. Thus, local variation is evident in the treatment of objects deposited in non-funerary settings, as well as in their use as grave goods.

THE STONE SHOVELS OF LINGNAN AND ADJACENT AREAS
(FOURTH–THIRD MILLENNIUM BCE)

Dated to the fourth and/or third millennia BCE, southern China's 'big stone shovels' – dashichan (大石铲), henceforth referred to as 'stone shovels' – are artifacts that differ typologically from large stone implements found in other parts of China, first appearing in Guangxi thousands of years before Lingnan had been incorporated into the expanding Qin (秦) empire at the end of the third century BCE. The archaeological evidence for the fourth–third millennia BCE points to the presence throughout much of Lingnan of small-scale egalitarian societies of limited socio-political complexity, with the most conspicuous exception to this pattern being northern Guangdong's third-millennium BCE Shixia (石峡) culture, whose burials indicate greater levels of social differentiation (Allard 1997: 42–4).

Stone shovels have been paid little attention by Chinese archaeologists and historians, who have typically shown more interest in objects linked (directly or indirectly) to datable historical contexts, or which are thought to have played some role in interregional spheres of interaction whose operation led to the emergence of Chinese civilization. In fact, Lingnan's stone shovels are not mentioned in early texts and did not undergo physical modifications leading to their reappearance in later, historically meaningful contexts. Furthermore, their distribution – based on presently available data – appears not to have extended much beyond Lingnan, having reached no further than Hainan (海南) Island and the northern periphery of present-day Vietnam. The following discussion of stone shovels (including site descriptions and locations) is based on information available in the following publications: Chen et al. (1982); He (2007); Jiang and Peng (1992); Tong and Tan (1978); Yang (1989, 1995); and Zheng (2005: 108–31). Much of the information about stone shovels in northern Vietnam (including their locations) was provided by Professor Trinh Nang Chung at the Institute of Archaeology of Vietnam (January 24, 2014: personal communication).

Although archaeologists began recording discoveries of stone shovels in southern Guangxi in the 1960s, there is as yet no comprehensive detailed study of these highly distinctive artifacts. Those interested in southern China's stone shovels are therefore forced to refer to a number of brief site reports, as well as a few articles providing overviews of the topic. Furthermore, the published information on the shovels remains inconsistent, with available sources leaving out (or disagreeing on) one or more of the following: the number, types, and spatial distribution of shovels at single sites; descriptions of shovel size and shape; drawings or photographs; the precise locations of sites; and information on the shovels' depositional contexts. However, even as we recognize the limitations of such an uneven database, it remains possible to provide a general

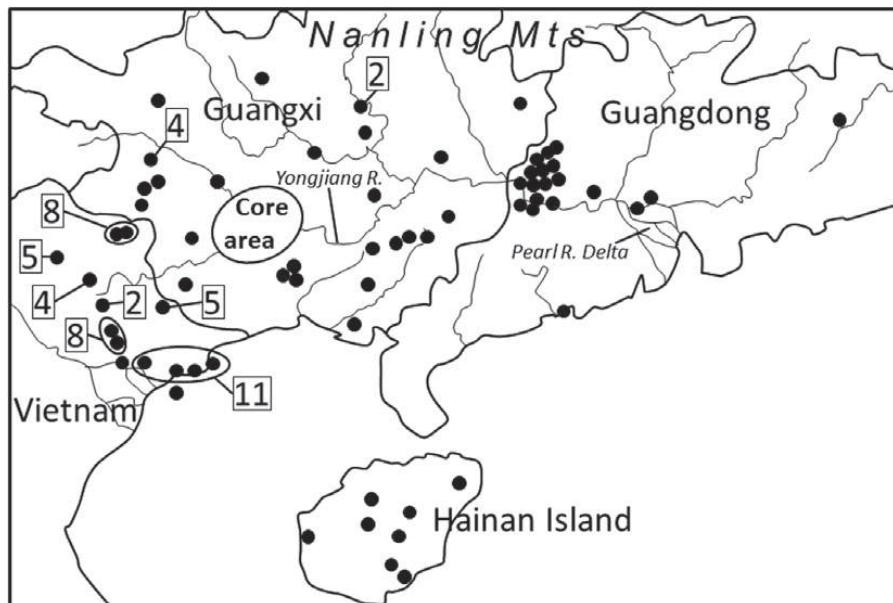


2.1. Selected stone shovels and archaeological contexts found in southern Guangxi's 'core area'. (Images drawn from photos taken by the author of exhibits at the Museum of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Nanning, 2011.)

overview of the stone shovel phenomenon in Lingnan and adjacent areas, as well as identify a number of patterns of relevance to the topic at hand.

The stone shovels are shouldered stone artifacts ranging in length from 5 to as much as 70 centimeters. They are typically well made, polished all over, and range in shape from simple to intricate, with some displaying carefully carved symmetrical outlines (Figure 2.1). A number of features point to their likely non-utilitarian function, including their large size, flat 'cutting edge', and the thinness of many of the shovels. Importantly, most of the stone shovels have been found either singly or in groups, but with no other associated artifacts, a situation which complicates their dating. On the basis of a few available radiocarbon dates and occasional associated objects of other types, most archaeologists suggest a date of fourth and/or third millennium BCE.

The shovels have been found at well over one hundred sites in about fifty counties, with the vast majority of the sites (and shovels) concentrated in a



2.2. Locations where stone shovels have been found. The number of shovels reported at individual sites or groups of sites is indicated. (Map by author.)

‘core area’ centered in southern Guangxi (Figure 2.2). Importantly for the purpose of this study, a clear distinction exists between this ‘core area’ and other parts of Lingnan and adjacent regions (Hainan Island and northern Vietnam), where stone shovels have also been found. The available data does not, however, permit the identification of chronological differences between the stone shovels found inside and outside the core area.

Stone Shovels and Sites in the Core Area

Covering an area over 5000 km² in size, the stone shovels’ core area is centered at the confluence of the Youjiang (右江), Yongjiang (邕江), and Zuojiang (左江) rivers in southern Guangxi. The shovels have been found at more than one hundred sites in about fifty counties, with the vast majority of the sites (and shovels) concentrated in southern Guangxi, specifically in a small ‘core area’ where – as further discussed below – all of the shovels may have in fact been produced (Figure 2.2). One 1978 publication lists a total of forty-five sites in five counties alone: Yongning (邕宁), Long’an (隆安), Wuming (武鸣), Fusui (扶绥), and Chongzuo (崇左) (Tong and Tan 1978). Measuring some 5000 m² (of which only a portion has been excavated so far), the site of Dalongtan (大龙潭) in Long’an County is one of the core area’s better known sites. A total of 234 artifacts have been recovered from the site, of which 231 (i.e. 99 percent of the total) are stone shovels. The other artifacts included one ceramic vessel, one stone chisel, and one stone artifact of unknown function (Chen et al. 1982).

Many of the shovels at Dalongtan were found in well-defined groups of up to twenty, either in ash pits or in excavation trenches with no apparent features. The groups displayed various arrangements: circular (with the shovels often placed vertically and side to side), 'U' shaped, in a row (with the shovels placed vertically and flat against one another), or lying flat on top of one another. In all cases where the shovels were placed vertically, their cutting edge pointed upward (Figure 2.1). Of note is the fact that many of the shovel arrangements were associated with burnt soil. Importantly, Dalongtan has yielded no evidence of habitation remains or of stone artifact production.

A number of authors have commented on the fact that other stone shovel sites in the core area share a number of features with Dalongtan. These similarities include their apparently singular function, the shovels' depositional contexts (e.g. spatial arrangements, presence of burnt soil, cutting edges pointing upward), as well as the sites' commonplace location on the slopes of small hills and in proximity of lakes and rivers. Not surprisingly, the shovels' physical features, combined with information about their archaeological contexts, have encouraged archaeologists to propose that they played an important role in local rituals. Typological links to earlier stone artifacts likely used in cultivation point to the possibility that the shovels had a function in fertility or agricultural rites, while the sites' association with hills and water has been interpreted by some as evidence that they served as loci for votive offerings to the gods and spirits of the natural world (Zheng 2005: 114–20).

Stone Shovels and Sites outside the Core Area

As shown on the map in Figure 2.2, stone shovels have also been found at many sites located outside the core area. Although many of the published reports on these 'peripheral' stone shovels are frustratingly lacking in details (with the objects' precise locations and archaeological contexts often not mentioned), a number of relevant observations can nevertheless be made and interpretations put forward.

1. The information provided in the published reports regarding the stone shovels' appearance and typological range reveals that the shovels found outside the core area were very similar to the ones recovered at sites inside the core area. For this reason, archaeologists familiar with this material believe that most, if not all, of the shovels in southern China (including Hainan Island and northern Vietnam) were manufactured in southern Guangxi's core area. Confirmation of this hypothesis will require mineralogical analysis.
2. In consideration of the previously proposed egalitarian nature and limited spatial extent of Lingnan's many individual social systems for this time period, I suggest that the stone shovels reached their final destinations along

indirect exchange routes rather than as a result of directed long-distance trade. Interestingly, the drop-off pattern indicated by the overall spatial distribution of stone shovel sites suggests the operation of what is sometimes called a ‘down-the-line’ exchange system, with stone shovels becoming less abundant at increasing distances from the locus of production. Having said this, the map also indicates the presence of localized concentrations of stone shovels, as is the case for western Guangdong, northern Vietnam, and Hainan Island. Although it is difficult to know whether such spatial irregularities result from demographic patterning across the region, differences in the intensity of archaeological fieldwork (and reporting of findings), and/or topographical constraints, we can nevertheless raise the possibility that local concentrations of stone shovels mark the presence of groups and leaders able to attract to themselves many of these exotic-looking artifacts – as the stone shovels would have appeared to those outside the core area – then moving across the landscape along indirect exchange pathways.

3. None of the shovels found outside the core area were recovered from the type of within-site depositional contexts reported for the core area. Although a few reports mention the presence of nearby ceramic shards or small stone tools, most shovels were found singly without associated artifacts. Furthermore, none of the relevant references or publications mention the presence of pits (ash or otherwise), or of shovels placed with their cutting edge pointing upward, although one was found in a vertical position (but with its ‘cutting edge’ pointing downward), while another is said to have been lying flat with a stone placed on top of it. There are a few instances of two or more shovels found together at a single site, although no information is provided on the depositional context of such findings. None were recovered from recognized burials, except for one interesting case of a shovel found in a Han dynasty grave (dating to thousands of years later), a finding of some relevance as it alerts us to the possibility that the stone shovels recovered from outlying areas may have reached their final destinations at very different times.
4. In regard to the broader geographical setting of the stone shovel locations, some of the references mention shovels found buried on hill slopes, indicating some parallel with the disposal of stone shovels in the ‘core area’.

Summary and Discussion

It is worth noting once again that aside from the single shovel found in a much later Han dynasty grave, all of the stone shovels found so far in Lingnan and surrounding regions have been recovered from what appear to be non-funerary contexts, with all indications pointing to these distinctive non-utilitarian artifacts playing some role in the ideological sphere. So, what may account for their consistent final use in non-funerary settings throughout Lingnan and

adjacent regions, rather than as grave goods? While it is tempting to suggest that practices relating to the disposal of shovels could have been shared broadly across Lingnan even in the absence of long-distance trade (or other) relations linking distant areas, the distinctive behaviors recorded for the core area in southern Guangxi warns us against inflating the importance and impact of such links. Instead, I suggest that the broadly shared behavior of disposal in non-funerary settings may be explained by similar constraints imposed and shared by Lingnan's many social systems. More specifically – and as discussed more fully later on – I propose that such constraints may be associated with the consistently low level of socio-political complexity recorded for the entire region at this time, this being the manner in which stone shovels were disposed of by egalitarian societies. Be that as it may, the evidence also underscores the fact that the use and treatment of stone shovels within the context of this region-wide practice of disposal in non-funerary settings was further refined to meet locally specific needs and customs, as evident from differences in shovel-related behavior between the 'core' and 'peripheral' areas, as well as within the latter.

NON-LOCAL BRONZE VESSELS AND BELLS IN LINGNAN (1000–200 BCE)

A number of large bronze vessels and bells dating to the pre-Qin period have been recovered from both funerary and non-funerary contexts in Lingnan. As in the case of the stone shovel trajectories discussed above, we witness here the movement of bronzes from core areas of production (in this case located in central and northern China) to more distant areas (Lingnan), where they appear to have experienced a reassignment of function. Together, the similarities and differences between the trajectories followed by the stone shovels and bronzes lead to a number of broader insights regarding the nature and impact of constraints on the fate of objects at the end of their 'lives'.

Bronze metallurgy was likely established in Lingnan between 1200 and 1000 BCE, with the first five or so centuries represented by simple artifacts such as fishhooks, awls, axes, and knives. Although local craftsmen were casting simple (and small) tripod vessels by the sixth century BCE, it is not until the fourth century BCE that larger, more complex, bronzes were being produced in imitation of bronzes in use north of Lingnan. For this reason, it is suggested that all pre-fourth-century BCE large vessels and bells found in Lingnan were manufactured in central or north China. I will henceforth sometimes refer to these bronzes as 'non-local'.

The large non-local bronze vessels and bells found in Lingnan and discussed in this section are closely linked typologically to bronzes associated with elite culture and activities in northern and central China. In the Yellow River valley, early bronze vessels include a range of cooking, heating, serving, and drinking vessels, some of which played a role in the rituals of that region's

second-millennium BCE states, with the Shang (商) dynasty (sixteenth–eleventh century BCE) celebrated for the technological mastery and functional diversity of its beautiful bronze vessels. By the final centuries of the second millennium BCE, stylistically distinctive bronze vessels were also being produced just south of the Yangzi River valley, in what are now the provinces of Hunan (湖南) and Jiangxi (江西). Bronze bells of various types, such as nao (铙), yongzhong (甬钟), and bo (镈), first appear in these regions between 1200 and 800 BCE, with some (e.g. yongzhong) believed to have originated in the Yangzi River valley itself. Chimes of bells, known as bianzhong (编钟), make an appearance during the eighth century BCE as musical instruments used in court rituals. Interestingly, and in clear contrast to the widespread placement of early bronze vessels and bells in graves throughout much of central and northern China, a large number of bronzes found in Hunan province have been recovered from non-funerary contexts – often in pits located on hills and near rivers and streams – with objects (such as jades and bronze axes) sometimes found inside the vessels.

Combining textual and archaeological evidence allows us to put forward the following general observations and interpretations regarding Lingnan's inhabitants and the region's relationship to polities located north of it during the period covered by this study (from 1000 BCE to its incorporation into the Qin empire at the end of the third century BCE). To begin, there is no textual or archaeological indication that Lingnan was at this time politically united or that it was under the control of state level societies centered to its north, although the state of Chu (楚) may have occupied – possibly only temporarily – portions of northern Guangxi during the fourth and third centuries BCE. The evidence instead points to the presence of numerous small-scale pre-literate societies, which Chinese sources sometimes identify as Yue (越). The appearance of wealthy burials in certain parts of Lingnan by the eighth century BCE indicates increasing levels of social inequality, a trend toward greater socio-political complexity which continues until the third century BCE. As discussed further below, these rich burials typically contained non-local bronze vessels and bells made north of Lingnan.

Aims, Methods, and Limitations

This section on non-local bronzes in Lingnan aims to reveal the broad outlines of the trajectories followed by bronze vessels and bells in this region between 1000 and 200 BCE. Although some mention is made of locally made copies of bronzes with typological origins north of Lingnan – all of these dating to the fourth or third centuries BCE – the focus is here on those large non-local vessels and bells which entered Lingnan from central or north China between 1000 and 200 BCE ([Figure 2.3](#)). The analysis



2.3. Selected ‘non-local’ bronze vessels and bells found in Lingnan during the period 1000–200 BCE.

- lei* vessel found at Matitang (马蹄塘), Lipu (荔浦) County, Guangxi. Found upside down in a pit. (Redrawn from GXB 1984, fig. 5, left.)
- you* vessel found at Mianlingshan (勉岭山), Wuming (武鸣) County, Guangxi. Found in a deep pit with a bronze *ge* (戈) dagger-axe. (Redrawn from Liang 1978, plate 4.2.)
- he* vessel found at Guangtouling (光头岭), Xinyi (信宜) County, Guangdong. Found in a pit. (Drawn from photo taken by author of object exhibited at the Hong Kong Museum of History, 2014.)
- yongzhong* bell found at Sanwucun (散屋村), Buluo (博罗) County, Guangdong. One of seven similar bells found together in a pit. (Redrawn from GDWB and GDB 1990, p. 39, bottom.)
- bo* bell found at Yingmin (英民), He (贺) County, Guangxi. Found at a depth of 40 cm. (Redrawn from Qin 1982, fig. 1.)
- lei* vessel found in Songshan burial. (Redrawn from Xu 1986, fig.V.)
- hu* vessel found in Songshan burial. (Redrawn from Xu 1986, fig.VI.)
- zun* vessel found in Yangjia burial. (Redrawn from ZGBWG and GXB 2006, p. 19.)

first draws a contrast between two distinct archaeological contexts from which the vessels and bells have been recovered in Lingnan: 1. As stray finds, suggesting their possible burial in non-funerary/non-residential settings; and 2. As grave goods. As discussed further below, a comparison of the bronzes recovered from these two different contexts reveals further patterns which are relevant to the broader topic of object trajectories and the fate of objects at the end of their ‘lives’. Having said this, we also need to recognize a number of key limitations which the available dataset imposes on interpretation.

1. Archaeological Context: While the archaeological context of those vessels and bells labeled as grave goods is unlikely to have been misidentified, it is more difficult to ascertain whether bronzes said to have been ‘found singly’ or ‘in pits’ were originally deposited in non-funerary settings, or whether they were not in fact grave goods belonging to unrecognized, unreported, or disturbed burials. In consideration of the fact that most of these bronzes were found with no associated artifacts, and that some bronze vessels and bells (in other parts of southern China) have been recovered from apparently carefully excavated pits, I will assume that these were ‘non-funerary’ bronzes, even as I also admit the possibility that some may have been burial goods.
2. Manufacturing Location: As Lingnan’s first-millennium BCE burial sites rarely contain evidence of bronze metallurgy (e.g. molds, crucibles, slag), the presence vs. absence of such remains cannot be used to determine where the bronzes were cast. The determination of a non-local (i.e. north of Lingnan) manufacturing location for the majority of the bronzes discussed in this study is therefore made on the basis of a number of other factors. First, the bronze vessels and bells identified as non-local are similar – and in some cases almost identical – to similar type bronzes found in larger quantities north of Lingnan. Second, the first eight centuries or so of metallurgy in Lingnan (i.e. 1200–400 BCE) are characterized by a clear distinction in graves between simple bronzes (e.g. fishhooks, awls, axes, knives, and simple tripod vessels) and larger complex bronze vessels and bells (believed to have first reached Lingnan beginning about 1000 BCE: see below), suggesting that these larger bronzes had not been produced locally.
3. Chronology: The absence of absolute dating methods complicates the task of dating the contexts – both funerary and non-funerary – from which the non-local bronzes have been recovered in Lingnan. Furthermore, the fact that their suggested manufacture north of Lingnan may have predated by hundreds of years their actual arrival in Lingnan makes it particularly difficult to date those non-funerary sites where bronze vessels and bells have been found singly with no associated artifacts. The solution – unsatisfactory as it may be – has been to date such sites based on the better dated finds of similar bronzes

north of Lingnan, thus assuming their relatively rapid movement into Lingnan following their production in central or north China.

4. Routes and Mechanisms of Transmission: While it is not possible to identify the precise routes of transmission along which non-local bronzes traveled before entering Lingnan, strong typological similarities with objects believed to have been produced at or near certain locations outside Lingnan sometimes allow us to suggest likely manufacturing locations and transmission routes. Thus, we may propose that at least some of Lingnan's bronzes vessels and bells were made in northern Hunan province and that they were transported upstream (i.e. south) along the (north-flowing) Xiang (湘) River, crossing into northern Guangxi at well-known mountain passes. In regard to the mechanisms of transmission, it remains equally difficult to determine the nature of the exchange systems which guided the bronzes into Lingnan from manufacturing locations north of it. In consideration of the fact that much of Lingnan's mountainous landscape appears to have been populated by numerous small-scale groups, it is likely that some of the bronzes reached those groups living in isolated areas via indirect (e.g. 'down-the-line') exchange systems operating along rivers and across mountain passes. In some cases, however, the occupants of wealthy burials located along rivers providing access to regions north of Lingnan may have enjoyed a more direct relationship with the producers or original owners of the bronzes in central or north China (see discussion below) (Allard 1994; Falkenhausen 2001).

I propose that the above-discussed limitations imposed by the data do not in the end preclude the identification of a number of relevant patterns in the trajectories followed by Lingnan's non-local bronze vessels and bells. Such patterns emerge when we consider the set of non-local bronzes as a whole – thus reducing the potential impact of exceptions and misidentifications – and when we distinguish between bronzes found as 'stray finds' (with no, or few, associated artifacts) and bronzes found as grave goods.

Non-Local Bronze Vessels and Bells Found as Stray Finds

A number of non-local bronze vessels and bells have been recovered from what appear to be non-funerary/non-residential contexts, as suggested by the absence of (or infrequent) associated artifacts and by references (in the reports) to being buried in 'pits' – I note that the terms 'cache' and 'hoard', which usually refer to sets of buried or hidden artifacts, may be less appropriate here. A total of thirty-seven stray bronze vessels and bells have been recorded at twenty-eight sites for this period ([Figure 2.4](#)). They include:

Vessels: Seven found at seven sites: three *lei* (罍), two *you* (卣), one *he* (盃), and one *ding* (鼎). Comments provided in the reports regarding the objects'



2.4. Locations of ‘non-local’ bronze vessels and bells found as stray finds (non-funerary contexts). Vessels are indicated by circles and bells by triangles. The number of bells found together at a single site is indicated. (Map by author.)

archaeological contexts include: Found in a pit (three mentions); found upside down in a pit, with stones placed on its bottom and near its shoulders; and found in a 2.7-meter-deep pit alongside a bronze *ge* (戈) dagger-axe (GXB 1984: 801–2; Liang 1978: 93; Xu 1975; Yang 1961).

Bells: thirty found at twenty-one sites: twenty-five *yongzhong* (including sets of seven, three, and two bells), four *nao*, and one *bo*. Comments provided in the reports regarding the objects’ archaeological contexts include: buried at a depth of 15–20 cm on a small hill; found in a fishing net; found with a bronze sword fragment; found in a pit; found in a pit at a depth of 1.54 meters; found in a pit with a bronze dagger and two other bronzes of unknown function; found at a depth of 70 cm, 1 meter from a bronze musical instrument; found at a depth of 40 cm; and found in a 2-meter-deep pit alongside ceramic sherds and one stone tool (Chen 1993; GDB and XGZ 1984: 48; GDWB and GDB 1990: 32, 33, 42; GXB 1984: 802–3; Jiang and Lan 1983; Liang 1978: 93, 96; Liu et al. 1990; Qin 1982; Zhong 1999; Zhu 1978).

Further relevant observations regarding the bronze vessels and bells found as stray finds include the following: 1. As shown in Figure 2.4, the sites are well distributed across central and eastern Guangxi, as well as northern Guangdong, with many stray bronzes found in mountainous areas; 2. The majority of the sites appear to date to the first half of the first millennium BCE, with the practice of burying bronze vessels and bells in non-funerary settings becoming less common after the fifth century BCE; 3. The reports provide almost no information about the geographical settings of the sites, although we note one



2.5. Locations of burial sites mentioned in the text. The dotted line indicates the extent of north-central Lingnan (as defined in the text for the purpose of this study). (Map by author.)

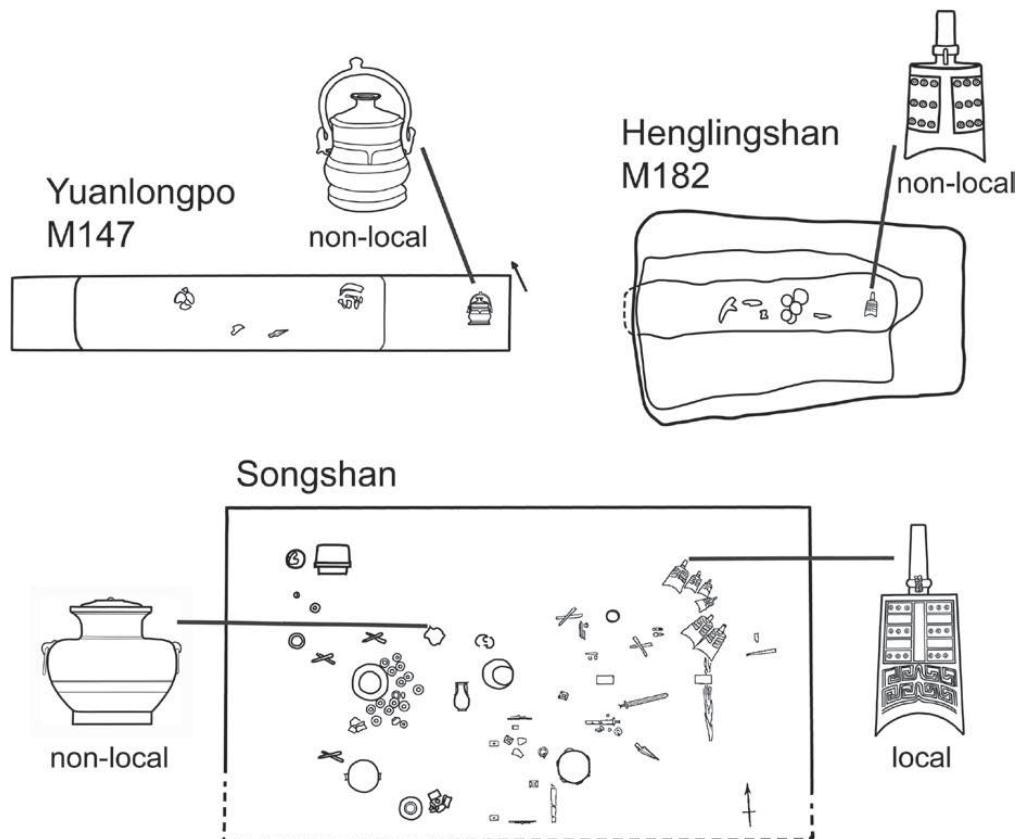
reference to a bell buried on a small hill, and another found in a fishing net (i.e. a possible association with water).

Non-Local Bronze Vessels and Bells Found as Grave Goods

A number of non-local bronze vessels and bells have been recovered from burials dating to the period 1000–200 BCE. A consideration of the contents and wealth of burials containing such bronzes draws an interesting contrast between north-central Lingnan (with its south and southeast-flowing rivers providing upstream access to central China across the Nanling [南岭] mountain range) and parts of Lingnan that are peripheral to this central area (Figure 2.5).

Dated to 1000–600 BCE and located in southern Guangxi (i.e. some distance from north-central Lingnan), the large cemetery of Yuanlongpo (元龙坡) has yielded some of the earliest non-local funerary bronzes found in Lingnan (GXW et al. 1988). The cemetery consists of 350 burials, whose generally small size of graves points to limited socio-political differentiation, as do their contents, with most burials containing from none to four grave goods. Measuring 4.0 meters long, M147 is one of the cemetery's largest burials (Figure 2.6). Its eight grave goods include seven of probable local manufacture (ceramic vessels, bronze weapons, and small stone fragments), as well as a *you* vessel, one of the cemetery's two bronze vessels believed to have been cast north of Lingnan. The other non-local bronze vessel, found in another grave, is a *pan* 盘.

Located closer to – but still outside – north-central Lingnan, the cemetery of Henglingshan (横岭山) in Guangdong province is also dated to 1000–600 BCE



2.6. Plans and selected grave goods of some of the burials mentioned in the text. Yuanlongpo burial M147: *you* vessel (non-local) (redrawn from GXW et al. 1988, plate 1.3); Henglingshan burial M182: *yongzhong* bell (non-local) (redrawn from GDY 2005, color plate 7); Songshan burial: *lei* vessel (non-local) (redrawn from Xu 1986, fig. v); and *yongzhong* bell (local) (redrawn from Xu 1986, fig. xi).

(GDY 2005). It consists of 302 burials whose contents indicate greater social differentiation than at Yuanlongpo. Burial M182, with twenty grave goods, a secondary ledge, and wall niche (both of these rare features at the cemetery), stands as one of Henglingshan's wealthiest graves (Figure 2.6). Its grave assemblage includes ceramic or 'proto-porcelain' vessels, bronze weapons, whetstones, as well as two *yongzhong* bells. The technical complexity and appearance of the bells, along with the early date of burial M182 (ninth century BCE), suggests a source north of Lingnan. Similarly, a *ding* vessel of likely non-local manufacture was found in a poorer grave at Henglingshan.

The emerging association between status and large bronzes of non-local manufacture witnessed at the cemeteries of Yuanlongpo and Henglingshan becomes more evident in a number of wealthy burials located in north-central Lingnan, along or near rivers which facilitated communication with

central China (across the Nanling mountain range). Two eighth-century BCE graves at the site of Madongcun (马东村) in northern Guangxi illustrate the earliest stages of this trend in north-central Lingnan. A single object of non-local manufacture (a bronze *lei* vessel) was found in the disturbed grave M1, while M2's seven grave goods included one bronze *ding* vessel and one *yongzhong* bell, both thought to have been made north of Lingnan (HZB 2001).

The sixth-century BCE single grave found at Yangjia (秧家) in northern Guangxi illustrates the continuing trend toward greater complexity and access to bronzes of non-local manufacture (GXB 1973). Measuring an impressive 8.0 by 4.0 meters, the Yangjia burial contained thirty-one grave goods, all of them bronzes, of which eight are vessels (five *ding*, one *lei*, two *zun* [尊]) and two are *yongzhong* bells (Figure 2.3 depicts one of the two *zun* found in the Yangjia burial). Of these ten bronze vessels and bells, six are believed to have been cast north of Lingnan and four – all tripod *ding* vessels – were most probably made locally. Importantly, these four *ding* vessels – all likely used as cooking implements – are typologically distinctive but technically simpler than Yangjia's non-local bronzes, as evident from their small size, simple shape (including splayed legs), and undecorated surfaces. For this reason, it may be that these *ding* vessels represent not attempts at copying the larger and more exotic looking non-local bronzes, but rather early examples of locally produced utilitarian objects that were by now larger than the earlier smaller bronzes (e.g. axes, arrowheads, fishhooks) produced by Lingnan's inhabitants over the previous five or so centuries.

Dating to the fourth century BCE, the rich grave at Songshan illustrates the continued importance of river-based communication between north-central Lingnan and regions north of Lingnan (GDB and ZQW 1974). The burial, which measured 8.0 by 4.7 meters, consisted of both an inner and outer coffin (Figure 2.6). A total of 139 grave goods were recovered, including twelve bronze vessels, four of which (two *lei*, one *hu* (壺), one *pan*) were likely made north of Lingnan, possibly in the state of Chu (see Figure 2.3 for examples of two non-local bronzes found in the Songshan burial). Importantly, all six *yongzhong* bells appear to have been cast locally as copies of non-local prototypes, indicating that there now existed in Lingnan the technical ability to produce larger bronzes than the above-mentioned undecorated *ding* with splayed legs (see Figure 2.6 for an example of a locally cast bell found at Songshan). Be that as it may, and as others have noted, the bells' poor manufacture would have resulted in their limited or flawed musicality, suggesting that they served primarily as prestige goods imitating – visually but apparently not musically – the chimes used in the court rituals of Chu and other states centered to the north of Lingnan (Falkenhausen 2001).

Summary and Discussion

Although there remains uncertainty about the dating and nature of many of the sites from which non-local bronzes have been recovered in Lingnan, the available data, when considered as a whole, does suggest that bronze vessels and bells made in central and north China were being transported into Lingnan during the entire period under consideration (1000–200 BCE). Most significantly, the dataset also indicates that the fate of individual bronzes was in part a function of the socio-political attributes – themselves linked to geographical location – of the societies which came to possess such objects. Thus, we find that small-scale egalitarian societies – which occupied much of Lingnan during this period – disposed of non-local bronzes of unknown function in non-funerary settings (often in ‘pits,’ according to the reports), a practice that seems – based on admittedly poorly dated sites – to have died out after the fifth century BCE. Regardless of whether the bronzes served as votive offerings or played other roles in the ideological sphere, their discovery in isolated mountainous settings does at least suggest the possibility that they were used in nature-focused rituals. The same has been argued in the case of the many early Hunan bronze bells and vessels which have been recovered from non-funerary pits on hillsides and near rivers (Xu 2011: 12).

In contrast, between the eighth and third centuries BCE, north-central Lingnan witnessed the appearance of single – or small groups of – wealthy burials whose grave assemblages included non-local bronzes. As illustrated by the location and contents of burials at Madongcun, Yangjia, Songshan, and other grave sites in north-central Lingnan, this association between socio-political complexity and access to non-local bronzes even intensified over the period in question. It is also likely that in comparison with the inhabitants of more peripheral/mountainous areas in Lingnan, the occupants of these wealthy burials enjoyed more direct relationships with the original owners of the bronzes in central or north China. This is suggested not only by the burials’ locations along rivers providing access to central China, but also by the interesting fact that the non-local bronzes found in Lingnan’s graves included many liquid containers that were typologically similar to local ceramic vessels, pointing to the possibility that the tomb occupants exercised some choice in the types of bronzes they were able to acquire from central China (Falkenhausen 2001).

Such long-distance relationships between elites living north and south of the Nanling mountain range could have involved the former distributing elaborate bronzes to local leaders in north-central Lingnan in exchange for their support and tribute, the latter of which could have included some of the region’s famous local products known to have been coveted by the Qin during the third century BCE (ivory, cinnamon, pearls, peacock feathers, and rhinoceros horns) (Allard 1994). Whatever the nature of such relationship, it

does appear as if Lingnan's elite owed their elevated wealth and status to the maintenance of such links, with the bronze vessels and bells serving not necessarily as the foundation of emerging socio-political complexity in Lingnan, but rather as its material expression. Seen from the perspective of Lingnan as a whole, these emerging complex systems from the eighth century BCE on appear to have gradually redirected the flow of bronzes to themselves, so that by the fifth century BCE, the movement of non-local vessels and bells to more peripheral areas had been significantly curtailed.

The contrast drawn above between bronzes as grave goods in (socio-politically complex) north-central Lingnan and bronzes as non-funerary deposits in (less complex) peripheral areas naturally brings up those instances of vessels and bells found in graves at the cemeteries of Yuanlongpo and Henglingshan, both of which were located outside the 'core area.' In fact, such findings do not in my opinion really challenge the distinction proposed above, as the bronzes – of which only a few have been found at the two cemeteries – could have reached these areas through indirect exchange networks, with the leaders of what were still societies of low socio-political complexity gaining preferential access to these exotic objects.

Having discussed the importance which the socio-political environment seems to have played in determining how the bronzes were disposed of at the end of their 'lives' (i.e. disposal in funerary vs. non-funerary settings), it remains to consider the further possibility of finer-level variation at the local level. Unfortunately, information about those bronzes found as stray finds is presently insufficient for us to identify the presence of behavioral variation among the known sites. In the case of Hunan during the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE, publications report that many of the locally cast bronze vessels and bells were intentionally buried in non-funerary pits, often on hillsides and near rivers. In the case of Lingnan, the limited number of references to the recovery of bronzes from 'pits (and in one case to the object's burial on a small hill) do not allow for a critical review of the issue of within- and between-region variation.

The impact of local needs and customs on the disposal of bronzes is seen more clearly in the case of vessels and bells recovered from wealthy burials in north-central Lingnan. Thus, the eclectic nature and inconsistent make-up of the bronze assemblages in these burials not only point to highly localized practices, they also suggest that the non-local bronzes likely reached the region divorced from their original functions in rituals whose strict sumptuary rules – in regions north of Lingnan, such as the state of Chu – determined the precise numbers and types of bronzes placed in the graves. Although the composition of the bronze assemblages may reflect some amount of personal choice and/or the limited availability of bronzes reaching Lingnan, it is also probable that full knowledge of the bronzes' original functions had in fact been lost – or

transformed – over the course of the transfer, with these visually striking (and, to the locals, ‘exotic’) goods used mainly as prestige items by Lingnan’s local elites. The previously mentioned local casting of Chu-style bells of limited musicality (see [Figure 2.6](#) for an example from the fourth-century BCE burial at Songshan) stands as an illustration of such a reassignment of function, in this case from bells with ritual and musical roles to bells as prestige goods meant primarily for display.

OBJECT TRAJECTORIES AND THE POWER OF DESTINATION

Considered as a whole, the evidence presented in this chapter regarding the trajectories followed by stone shovels, bronze vessels, and bells in pre-imperial Lingnan offers some support for the idea that a system of ‘nested practice’ determined each object’s fate at the end of its ‘life’. At the most general (i.e. ‘least specific’) level, the degree of socio-political complexity appears to have been the dominant factor. Thus, those objects which moved away from their locus of production to distant areas populated by social systems of low socio-political complexity (i.e. all of the stone shovels and some of the bronzes) were disposed of in non-funerary settings, possibly playing a role in nature-focused rituals. In contrast, many of those objects transported to – or through – areas characterized by higher levels of socio-political complexity (i.e. some of the bronzes) ended their ‘lives’ as grave goods. Interestingly, and in support of the model proposed here, the single instance of a known burial containing a stone shovel is a grave located outside north-central Lingnan and dating to the Han dynasty, by which time complex societies had emerged in many parts of Lingnan. At the least general (i.e. ‘most specific’) level, the admittedly incomplete dataset does nevertheless suggest the likelihood of locally specific practices operating within the behavioral limits set by the broader socio-political environment.

Even as it admits the possibility that future data may challenge its specific findings, the present study serves as a counterpoint to the notion that the fate – or final disposal – of single objects traveling extensively through space and time without their original function reflects endless possibilities. Instead, I suggest that individual trajectories are guided and constrained by a number of factors operating at varying levels of specificity. Possibly, the ‘nested practice’ concept proposed here may also help account for patterning in the ritual practices of other past cultures. One such example might be the well-known case of votive offerings during the Iron Age of northern Europe, where broadly shared behaviors associated with deposits of objects in watery settings were also mediated through local beliefs and customs. To be sure, further focused research in other regions, combined with data gathered from cross-cultural studies, will be needed to evaluate the broader usefulness of the ‘nested

practice' concept as it applies to the fates of single objects experiencing a reassignment of function following extensive movement through space and/or time. More specifically, the correlation which this study has identified between the treatment of objects and the recipient social system's level of socio-political complexity also needs to be tested in other regions of the world, the question being: to what extent is the practice of depositing rare exotic items in non-funerary settings (as opposed to burials) characteristic of egalitarian societies? And if such a correlation is found to hold, what are the reasons underlying such behavior? More generally, an expanded cross-cultural dataset is required to better understand the many factors and forces that guided and constrained the life histories of objects.

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THREE

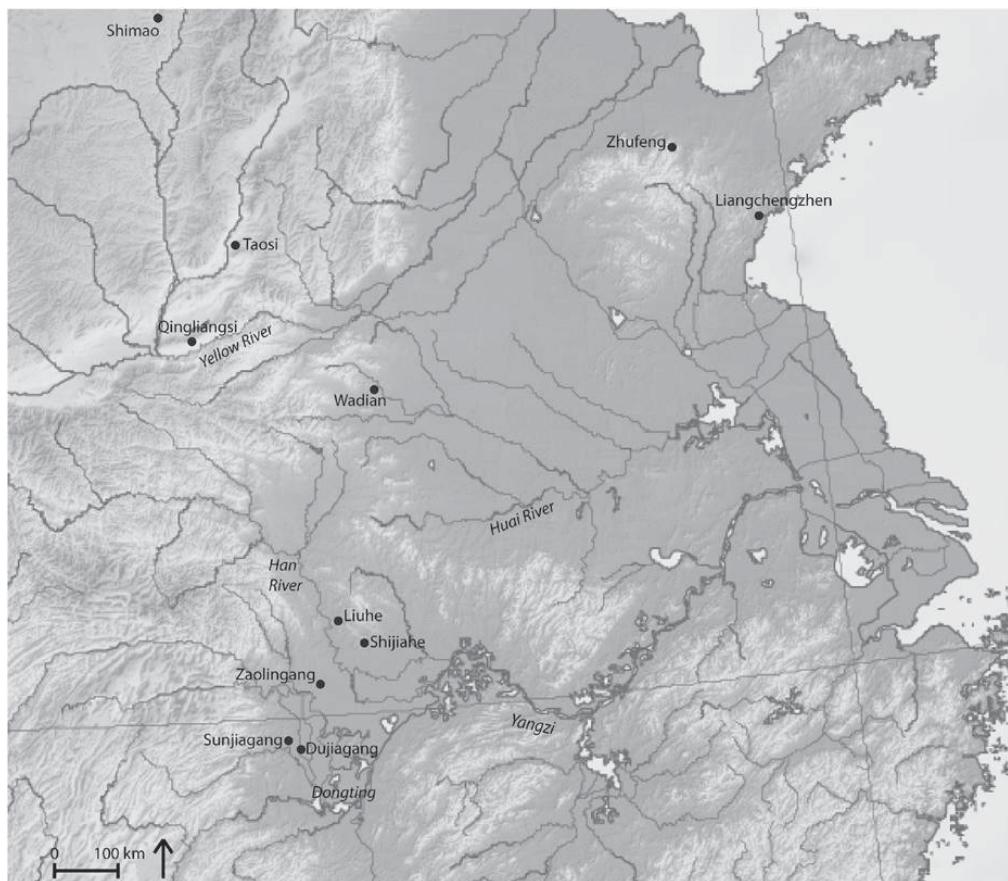
THE WHOLE AND FRAGMENTED LIVES OF JADE OBJECTS FROM LATE NEOLITHIC MIDDLE YANGZI RIVER BURIALS (C. 2000 BCE)

Sascha Priewe

INTRODUCTION

Though unevenly used across China, jade had been an important component of Neolithic life after it began to be used sometime before 5000 BCE. The presence of jade in many archaeological contexts has contributed to its use in interpretations of craft specialisation, exchange among elites, socio-political organisation, the identity of owners and religious practices etc. Often found in burials, a metonymic reading of the burial goods has been applied to jade and the deceased's standing as a high-ranking member of his or her community inferred. However, rarely has jade been studied from the perspective of object biography (Kopytoff 1986) narrating the process from an object's birth via life to its death. As noted by Joy (2009: 543), applying this approach to prehistoric objects is particularly difficult, given the absence of huge portions of the object's life, often only with evidence for production and death, i.e. final deposition. This is also true for Neolithic jades from China, where the best evidence comes from burials with almost no information on sources and workshops. Many inferences have been made as to the use of jade in life a person's life, for example as prestige goods (Liu 2003).

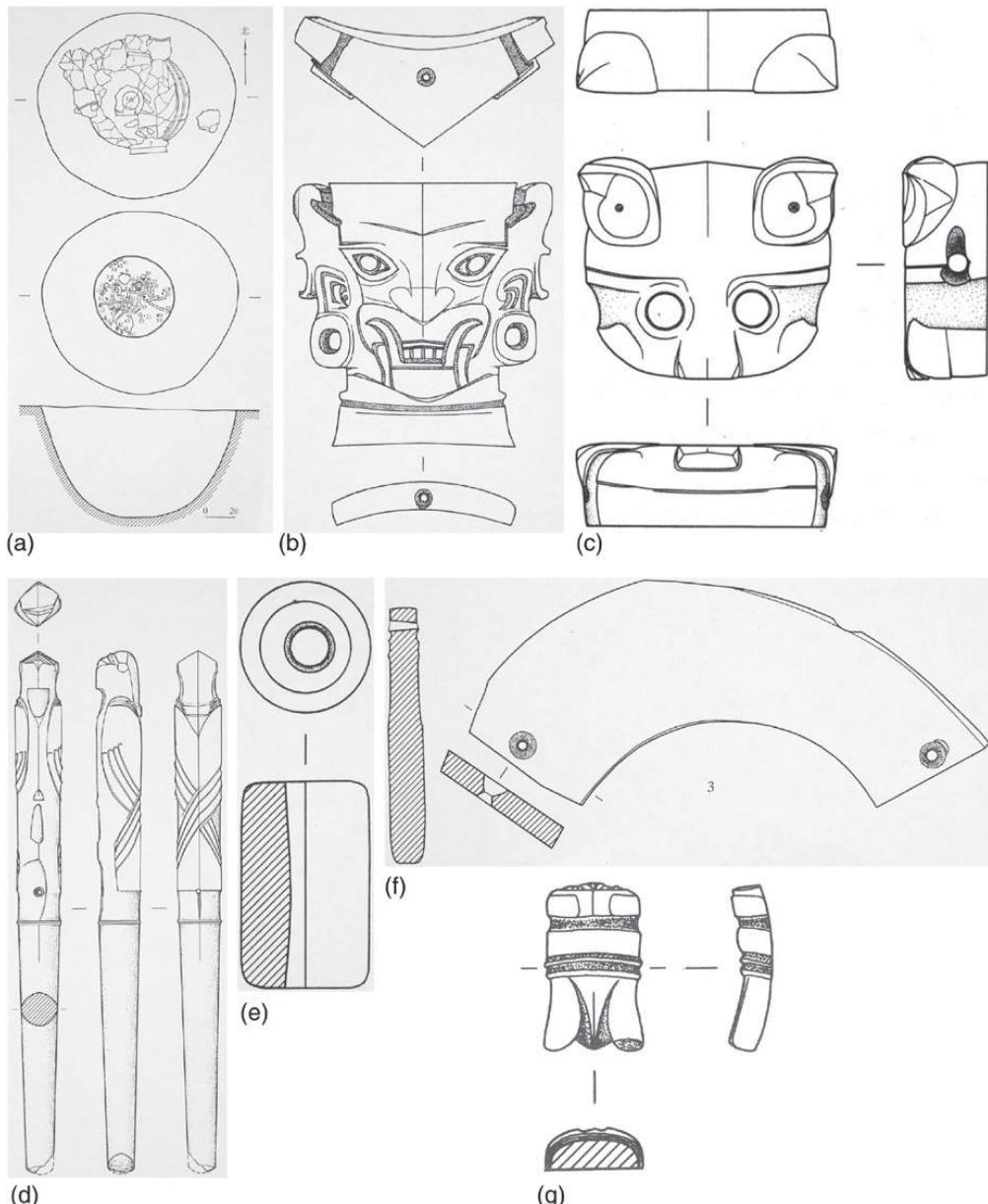
In this chapter, I will attempt to illustrate the ways in which jade and other hardstones found in specific mortuary contexts during the late Neolithic (late third millennium BCE, about 2000 BCE; [Figure 3.1](#)) along the middle reaches of the Yangzi River acquired meanings in their lives which then governed their deposition upon burial. I will argue that the differential trajectories of the



3.1. Sites mentioned in the text. Sites in Hubei: Shijiahe, Liuhe, Zaolingang; Hunan: Sunjiagang, Duijagang; Henan: Wadian; Shanxi: Taosi; Shaanxi: Shimao, Qingliangsi; Shandong: Zhufeng, Liangchengzhen. (Map created by the author.)

objects throughout their ‘lives’ converged upon burial. A particular emphasis will be placed on the ways some of the jades were deliberately fragmented prior to burial.

The group of objects to be discussed here largely consists of ornaments, often intricately carved, and small tools. Five samples from the cemetery of Xiaojiawuji (肖家屋脊) were analysed by X-ray Diffraction (XRD) by Wang et al. (Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan et al. 1999) and another five by the same method by Wu et al. (2001) and found to be nephrite, which together with jadeite, which began to be used in China from the sixteenth century, forms ‘true jade’. A ‘beast head’ in the British Museum (registration number 1947,0712.515) similar to the one found in urn W6 at Xiaojiawuji (Figure 3.2b) and dated accordingly, was identified by Raman spectroscopy to be of nephrite as well. Other hardstones could be identified, based on visual inspection, as steatite, quartz (including other varieties such as chalcedonite



3.2. Urn W6 (a) and selected jades (b beast head, c tiger head, d bird pin, e bead, f *huang*, g cicada) found in W6 at Xiaojiawuji, Shijiahe, Hubei. (After Hubei Jingzhou diqu bowuguan et al. 1999: 298, fig. 232; 316, fig. 251:1; 324, fig. 256:4; 329, fig. 260:1; 333, fig. 262:5; 334, fig. 263:3; 321, fig. 254:1.)

and rock crystal) and turquoise (Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan et al. 1999: 430–4; Jingzhou Bowuguan 2008: 11–12). The term ‘jade’ will be used as shorthand for the entire group of objects, reflecting the fact that the majority appears to consist of nephrite. It is possible that the Neolithic inhabitants of

the Middle Yangzi may not have made a clear distinction between the various materials.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

The ‘jades’ come from a group of late Neolithic cemeteries in the Middle Yangzi region, which encompasses the alluvial plain north and south of the Yangzi in present-day Hubei (湖北) and Hunan (湖南) provinces (Figure 3.1). Previously dated to the Shijiahe Culture (石家河文化), the cemeteries are now recognised to belong to the ‘Post-Shijiahe’ (后石家河文化) or ‘Sanfangwan Culture’ (三房湾文化), the date for which is estimated to lie between 2100 and 1900 BCE based on comparison to archaeological cultures in the middle reaches of the Yellow River (Guo Weimin 2010). This ‘culture’ concludes the sequence of late Neolithic archaeological cultures, which usually consists of the ‘Daxi Culture’ (大溪文化), the ‘Qujialing Culture’ (屈家岭文化), the ‘Shijiahe Culture’ followed by the ‘Post-Shijiahe Culture’ (Figure 3.3), though the Qujialing and Shijiahe cultures have also been merged into the ‘Qujialing-Shijiahe Culture’ (Zhang 2013). This sequence has been much debated and is not without problems (see Priewe 2012 for a proposal to step away from the culture-historical sequence altogether; cf. Guo Lixin 2005 for a more complex/complete sequence). Nonetheless, it shall provide rough chronological anchors in order to date the finds of jades in the region, which is also necessitated by the fact that many finds were only dated by vague culture-historical attributions.

The major sites at which jades were found are Shijiahe (loci of Xiaojiaowuji and Luojiabailing (罗家柏岭)), in Tianmen (天门) county (Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan et al. 1999; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 1994);¹ Liuhe (六合) in Zhongxiang (钟祥) city (Jingzhou diqu bowuguan and Zhongxiang xian bowuguan 1987); Zaolingang (枣林岗) north of Jingzhou (荆州) (Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan 1999), all in Hubei; and Sunjiagang (孙家岗) in Li Xian (澧县) in Hunan (Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Li xian wenwu guanlichu 2000) (Figure 3.1). Some finds were made at other sites but these have not been reported in sufficient detail or are surface finds without proper archaeological context, which is why they will be excluded from this study. At all sites with the exception of Sunjiagang, which will be discussed separately, the jades are associated with urn burials (Figure 3.2). Some have surfaced from unspecified contexts but are still spatially and stratigraphically associated with the cemeteries.

Notably, prior to occurring in these mortuary contexts, jade rarely appears in the Middle Yangzi region (see overviews in Yang 2006 and Priewe 2012). It is possible that this reflects a lack in jade sources but the appearance of jade

Daxi Culture	5000–3300 BCE
Qujialing Culture	3300–2600 BCE
Shijiahe Culture	2600–2100 BCE
Post-Shijiahe/ Sanfangwan Culture	2100–1900 BCE

3.3. Conventional sequence of late Neolithic archaeological cultures in the Middle Yangzi River region.

in the ‘Post-Shijiahe Culture’ in around 2000 BCE shows that its acquisition was possible by then, even though the quantities appear to have been low. These jades are without immediate precedent in the region, especially at the high level of craftsmanship they portray. For example, the features of the faces ([Figure 3.2](#)) were traced in relief lines. While

it is easier to incise jade, the relief was achieved by abrading the spaces around it, a much more labour- and time-consuming process requiring great skill. This technique is often regarded as a defining characteristic of these jades from the Middle Yangzi, i.e. possibly a phenomenon particular to this region (Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: 12–13). This level of craftsmanship suggests that there must have existed people with the appropriate skills and it is conceivable that they have come from outside of this region. While the existence of a jade and stone workshop at the Shijiahe locus of Luojiabailing was suggested, the veracity of this suggestion is difficult to assess from the published report (Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 1994). However, overall, the types of jades discussed in this chapter appear to have been made in the Middle Yangzi, where they appear in the largest quantities, while the source of the material may have been elsewhere. Compared to jades from other regions, the design of the ornaments is also a novelty, especially that of the jade faces, tigers and bird pins ([Figure 3.2](#)). In light of the rather homogeneous nature of the jades both technologically and typologically and the consistency of their depositional contexts, it is likely that they are an innovation of the Middle Yangzi, while also drawing on design features from elsewhere (Deng 2007).

The appearance of jades should be seen in the wider historical context of the Middle Yangzi. Throughout much of the third millennium many (enclosed) sites had been continuously occupied. People engaged in long-distance interaction particularly involving objects used in religious contexts (Priewe 2012). Towards the end of the third millennium most sites experienced an episode of abandonment and only a few sites, such as Shijiahe, were resettled in around 2000 BCE, constituting the ‘Post-Shijiahe Culture’. The differences to the earlier periods can most dramatically be seen in the way in which people were buried. While pit burials had previously been more popular than urn burials, the latter became almost the exclusive burial type. Burials in urns began to include adults, contrasting with the preceding periods when urns were largely reserved for children. This drastic change in burial customs, which now included the deposition of jades, appears to reflect major changes in society. It is in this climate of change that jade found wide acceptance in the Middle Yangzi and was used to create the types discussed here.

DATING THE MIDDLE YANGZI CEMETERIES

Shijiahe is the only site with a long and well-reported chronology, which makes it the benchmark site for dating the others. The (Neolithic) occupation of Shijiahe lasted for about two millennia until the very end of the third millennium. It was during the ‘Post-Shijiahe Culture’ or ‘Sanfangwan Culture’ in about 2100 to 1900 BCE that urn burials formed a large cemetery at the locus of Xiaojiaowuji. Xiaojiaowuji’s relative dates and last occupation in the Neolithic sequence allows suggesting similar dates for the Liuhe, Zaolingang and Sunjiagang cemeteries, thereby offsetting the lack of stratigraphic evidence at these sites. For example, at the cemetery of Zaolingang (Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan 1999: 6), the urns were so close to the surface that many were damaged. Also, none of the burials cut into each other, eliminating stratigraphy as an indicator of relative chronological relationships. Some loosely distributed, unreported pottery sherds summarily attributed to the ‘Shijiahe Culture’ are of no help either. The only possible evidence for dating the cemetery, in absence of any absolute dates, is the close similarities to the Xiaojiaowuji cemetery. The Liuhe and Sunjiagang cemeteries therefore also date to the same period. Sunjiagang will be separately discussed below and not as part of the group of Xiaojiaowuji, Liuhe and Zaolingang, as the burials consist of pits, thereby diverging from the practices observed at the sites north of the Yangzi.

THE BURIAL CONTAINERS

At Xiaojiaowuji, Zaolingang and Liuhe the deceased were placed in lidded earthenware containers of various shapes. For example, at Xiaojiaowuji, sixty-one of the seventy-seven burials contained *weng* (瓮) containers, which is a term that might be glossed as an urn (Figure 3.2). These are often rather large, around 50 to 60 cm in height and around 40 cm in diameter, commonly made of fine grey earthenware and covered in impressed patterns and three to four bowstring or cord-shaped appliquéd lines. The excavators suggest that this type was especially made for mortuary use (Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan et al. 1999: 292), which appears plausible as no other contexts contained *weng*. However, a subtype found in burial W35 and several others is similar to pottery found in pits and cultural layers (Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan et al. 1999: 244, 248). Hence some containers may have been in use prior to being adopted for burial, while others were made for express burial use. Some containers, such as the *weng* in W6 (Figure 3.2), were sawn down, removing parts of the vessel, probably to make the two containers a better fit for each other.

Although many burials were disturbed, some lids remained. Seventeen of the *weng* at Xiaojiaowuji have lids, ten of which are also *weng*. These and other

vessels, such as *pen* (盆), *gang* (缸), *bo* (钵), *pan* (盘) and *dou* (豆), which were used as lids, were fitted mouth to mouth. Another feature, frequently observed at all three cemeteries, is a hole of approximately 2 cm in diameter that was drilled into the base of some containers. Some scholars believe that these allowed the soul to leave, but this notion is an anachronism based on what is known about beliefs about the soul in the Han (汉) period (on the soul in the Han period, see Yu 1987). Interestingly, the custom of drilling holes into the containers also existed during previous phases. It is only in about 2000 BCE that more vessels were treated in this way, suggesting that whatever meaning was attached to this practice, it must have become more widespread.

BURIAL GOODS

Most burials are devoid of any objects, but those that are not contain mostly small ornaments made of jade or other hardstones. Only two urns at Xiaojiaiwuji contained other objects, for example, W6 contained a red pottery cup and a pig's tooth, and some copper ore was found in W49. Fifteen of the seventy-seven urns at Xiaojiaiwuji contain hardstones of some kind. Among the 157 excavated 'jades', 109 come from burials, thirty-three from cultural layers, one from a pit and fourteen are surface collections. The excavators plausibly suggest that all must have come from urn burials or been intended as grave goods, because many urns were damaged or disturbed and urn fragments were said to be scattered around (Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan et al. 1999: 314–15). Nonetheless, I will limit this analysis to objects recovered from secure contexts. The jades and other burial goods are distributed unevenly among the urns (Figure 3.4). W6 with a total of fifty-nine items is clearly an outlier. The average number of burial goods including W6 is seven and without W6 is three and a half. The latter appears to indicate a more plausible average.

Overall, the jades from Xiaojiaiwuji are small in size, often not larger than a few centimeters across. While a variety of types (Figure 3.2) appears across the cemetery, such as 'beast' heads, 'tiger' heads, bird pins, beads, tubes, pendants, plaques, spindle whorls, *huang* (璜) arc-shaped pendants and others, these are usually singular items. There are only two types that appear more often. Six out of the fifteen urns with grave goods contain one or more cicada, which is the largest group of identifiable ornaments. But the most prolific group is not the pristine examples that could be easily sorted into neat categories, but those that were subsumed under the loose but probably accurate label of 'fragments' (Chinese *suikuai* 碎块, *suipian* 碎片). Nine of the urns yield one to four fragments. The impression is gained that fragments form a substantial sub-category among the burial goods, which is further substantiated when one scrutinises the other types. Many appear damaged, partially or otherwise fragmented. Some show minor damages on the surface, such as chipping or

Urn	Number of jades	Other items	Total number
W6	56	1 red pottery cup; 1 pig tooth; 1 stone bead	59
W7	5		5
W12	2		2
W17	8		8
W23	1		1
W24	2		2
W25	5		5
W30	3		3
W33	3		3
W50	3		3
W58	2		2
W59	2		2
W69	1		1
W71	7		7
W90	8		8

3.4. Numbers of jades from urns at Xiaojiajuji, Shijiahe site, Hubei.

heavy weathering, while others were excavated as complete objects but in several pieces. Others were buried as parts of what would originally have been a larger, complete piece.

Before taking this observation further, at this stage it begs the question whether any post-depositional processes may have resulted in this fragmentation. While the upper parts of most burials were damaged, the jades were usually found at their bottoms. In most cases, the damaged or even destroyed pottery would have collapsed on top of the urn content, thereby burying it. This probably resulted in protecting the jades from damage. Considering the hardness of jade (6–6.5 on Mohs' scale) and the other hardstones, it is difficult to conceive how these may have been fragmented through natural processes, especially when the evidence of the partial and unidentifiable pieces found in such closed contexts is taken into account. While some pre-depositional damage, e.g. chipping as often observed, is possible and not unusual, the deposition of fragmented pieces and fragments must have been deliberate. The larger sample from urn W6 confirms this impression. While many of the pieces from this urn appear intact, a fair amount seems damaged, incomplete, reworked or simply fragmented.

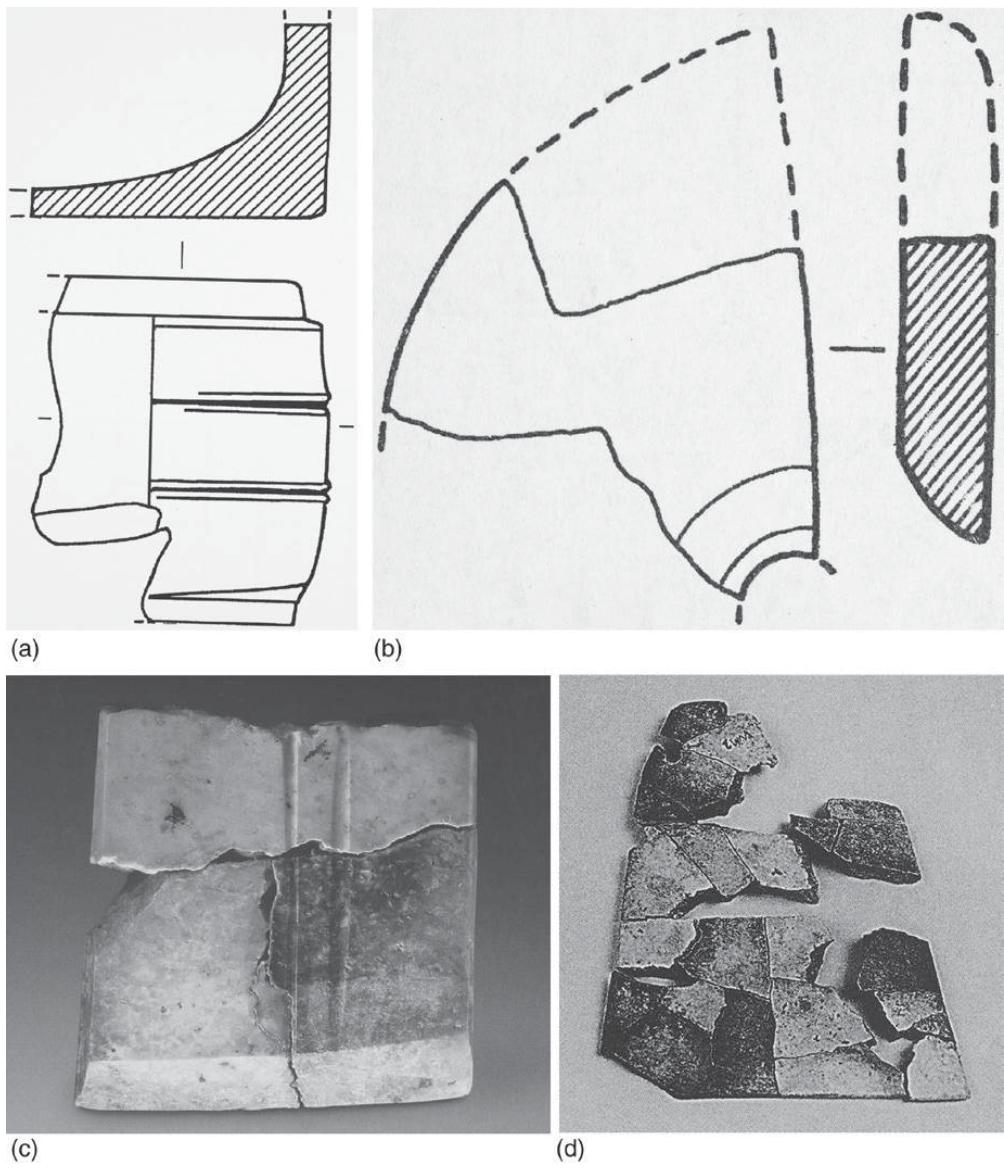
The other cemeteries support these observations. At Liuhe many of the same types as at Xiaojiajuji were found, although the smaller number of finds and the way they were reported neither allows for a quantitative evaluation as above nor for an assessment of whether the pieces were fragmented. In the

photographs in a recently published catalogue of jades of the ‘Shijiahe Culture’ many seem complete (Jingzhou bowuguan 2008). However, in the same publication it is noted that the number of fragments recovered from the urns is very large and since many bear tools marks they are considered scrap material from a jade workshop, which in turn is taken to show that the jades were produced at Liuhe (Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: 4). While this might be true, the important observation is the burial of fragments with the deceased, which appears to mirror the situation at Xiaojiaiwuji.

At Zaolingang, forty-three out of forty-six burials contain jade (Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan 1999). The assemblage is distinctive from the other cemeteries (Figure 3.5). A major difference is the occurrence of jades, which were identified as fragments of tubes (*cong* 琮) (Figure 3.5a) and discs (*bi* 碧) (Figure 3.5b), i.e. shapes originating from the Lower Yangzi, and those that dominate the assemblages and are exclusive to Zaolingang: small tools. Many urns contain adzes, chisels and drills together with other tools, such as an axe blade in one case and knives in others. Strikingly, almost all recovered pieces are highly fragmented. Barely one is complete and often a piece can only be (partially) assembled from fragments that happen to belong to it. The deceased were therefore buried deliberately with fragments and objects that appear to have been broken prior to deposition. This impression is further substantiated by the group of pieces that could not be typed properly and were assigned to the general category of ‘fragments’ (some of these may belong to tools but could not be refitted). Quantitatively, this group dominates the assemblage at Zaolingang.

USES OF THE JADES AND DISPOSAL OF THE BODY

For the pieces that could be typed, two major, complementary functions were proposed: adornment of the body and religious uses. As conveniently summarised by Zhang Xuqiu (Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: 14–18), religious meanings have been inferred from those in the shape of humans, beasts and animals. Seen as symbols of religious expression, such as ancestor spirits, both human and animal jades are often conventionally regarded as communicators between the human world and the gods, as envoys between earth and heaven, and used by shamans. Such interpretations are largely related to specific identifications of the jade animals, such as phoenix or dragon, and appear implausible. Most religious interpretations, such as that of shamanism, are derived from expectations based on much later periods or certain ideas about ancient religions. None of these is grounded in the specifics of the Neolithic evidence. Religious notions should not be excluded though. For example, the ‘beast heads’ combining human facial features with those of animals, which is especially clearly seen in the fangs (Figure 3.2b), may indicate a mythical or



3.5. Selected jades from Zaolingang. (After Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan 1999: 50, fig. 35:5; pl. 4:1; and Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: no. 166, no. 149.)

- Drawing of a *cong* tube fragment.
- Bi* disc fragment.
- Smashed tool.
- Partially refitted tool.

supernatural creature. They show that the inhabitants of the Middle Yangzi created an understanding of the world around them, from which they derived a cosmology. Although we may never know the exact nature of their beliefs, the beast heads and other jades clearly show that these may have been complex.

It may be no coincidence that all of these jades were found in burials and as such were ritualised (Bell 1992) regardless of their function prior to funerary deposition at the junction between life and death.

Personal adornment is the second major function suggested for the jades. However, the general lack of human remains in the urns makes interpretations difficult as the relationship between the body and the jades is obscured. The deceased may have been cremated or the body been disarticulated and placed into the urn. An earlier example of an infant at the Shuangfengdian (双坟店) site, Shiyan (十堰), Hubei, shows that its body was twisted and placed into the urn (Wang Xintian, personal communication, June 2010). Whether this practice continued into and also included the burials of adults at the cemeteries discussed here in the later period defies assessment due to the poor preservation of the skeletal remains. It is because of these obscurities that the deposition of the jades remains difficult to assess.

It is possible that the jades were used as ornaments for adornment of the body with the possible exception of those pieces which may have been smashed prior to burial (see below). The regularly observed one or two small perforations at edges allow for suspension and sewing onto fabrics, which may also have been the case for some of the small tools from Zaolingang. There are no such perforations in deliberately destroyed pieces, suggesting that the destruction occurred in relation to the funeral. Hollow and bead-like jades may have been strung up or also used as pendants. The objects often identified as pins may have been hairpins, but these often have a horizontal hole in the middle, suggesting other uses as well.

The small size of the jades requires close-up viewing in order to discern the intricate designs, if present. In fact, the small size is one of the defining features of the Middle Yangzi jades, which sets them apart from jades from the surrounding regions, for example those attributed to the earlier ‘Liangzhu Culture’ (良渚文化) (3300–2000 BCE) in the Lower Yangzi. It is likely that most of the jades are reworked pieces, not permitting any kind of waste, as jade as a material appears to have been rare in the Middle Yangzi. As a consequence, jade and the ornaments made from it must have been highly valued by owners and their burial at the death of a person was a considerable expenditure on part of the community. Given this value of jade, it is likely that the ornaments adorned the dress of the living and were not just used for the dead. The physical appearance of the living, especially of those wearing the jades as opposed to those who did not, was of crucial importance for communicating their social identity (Sørensen 1997: 93). The jades could thus have been used to set people apart from each other, although it is not clear whether these differences are directly reflected by the burials. However, not all jades were treated in the same way and it is these differences that will be discussed in the remainder of the chapter.

OBJECT TYPOLOGIES AND FRAGMENTATION

The observation of fragmentation is significant, as it has rarely been noted for the Neolithic in China (cf. Huang 2003, Zhang 2005) and undermines conventional typologies of the Middle Yangzi jades. Fragments are usually interpreted as evidence for jade working and the existence of workshops. The lack of attention paid to them is rooted in current typological predilections emphasising neat typologies of identifiable things. For the Middle Yangzi, five categories with various subtypes were proposed: Humans; animals, including cicadas, tiger heads, eagles, phoenixes, dragons, deer and rams; ‘normal’ ornaments, including pins, handle-shaped objects, various plaques, tubes, pendants, earrings, *huang* arc-shaped pendants, beads and the like; ritual objects, including *bi* discs, *cong* tubes and *yazhang* (牙璋) tablets; and finally tools, including adzes, chisels, drills and spindle whorls (Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: 8–11).

There are several problems with this type of typology. First, while these groupings are based on perceived functions, human heads and animals were grouped based on their appearance and thus separated from the ornaments, although it is possible that they were ornaments as well given the small perforations discussed earlier and would therefore be a better fit for this group. Secondly, the functional attribution of some of the jades is open for debate. For instance the ‘ritual objects’ are not self-evidently so, but as shown below, these were employed differently from the way they tended to be used in their region of origin, which, in case of the *bi* and *cong*, is the Lower Yangzi region where they were usually found (intact) in burials. Their actual function and meaning are still unknown. Thirdly, the emphasis is on whole pieces. Most reports on the jades show line drawings that disguise their fragmentary nature and only a few images are published that clearly show that the jades are fragmentary. Consequently, finds that were labelled in the reports as fragments and could not be grouped by the established types are omitted from the typology, although they constitute a major part of the assemblage. A defining characteristic of the assemblage has thus never been taken into account. The typology of these objects ignores not only an important category of objects, but also lacks a number of objectively identifiable traits that justify it. The emphasis on categories that are highly interpretative and, as such, often conjectural and out of context defies a clear purpose that typologies require in order to be meaningful (Adams and Adams 1991).

DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF OBJECTS

In the following, I will discuss the differential treatment of jades. The discussion will show that their treatment upon burial reflects different life histories and the different social processes the jades were involved in, all of which

converged at the moment of the funeral. An assessment of the degree of fragmentation shows that fragmentation was probably related to the ways some groups of objects were treated prior to final deposition. Two basic patterns can be identified, although there is room for overlap:

1. whole (intact) pieces, including some damaged pieces with heavy weathering and minor chipping;
2. broken pieces that could be (partially) reassembled and those that were incompletely deposited.

Complete Pieces

The first category consists of complete pieces, such as human, tiger and beast heads, and bird pins. Though the stone often shows alterations these may be due to post-depositional processes and not to human interventions. The sometimes observed chipping may also be due to accidental damage and appears to not have been deliberately brought about. These types were simply left intact. Significantly, it is these that were found at sites beyond the Middle Yangzi region and their maintenance may be due to their employment in long-distance interactions.

Similar jades to those from the Middle Yangzi appear at sites in Henan (河南), Shaanxi (陝西), Shanxi (山西) and Shandong (山东), all of which could be dated to about 2000 BCE (Priebe 2012: 267 et passim; Figure 3.1). The first site is Wadian (瓦店), Yuzhou (禹州), Henan, where a bird pin was found in an urn not too dissimilar from those further to the south (Henan Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2004). In Shaanxi, two jade bird pins and a tiger head were discovered at the important site of Shimao (石峁), Shenmu (神木) (Dai Yingxin 1988), and two tiger heads come from a cemetery at Qingliangsi (清涼寺), Ruicheng (芮城) (Guojia Wenwuju 2005: 17–20). The large burial M22 at Taosi (陶寺), Xiangfen (襄汾), Shanxi, contained a jade ornament, which is very similar to one from urn W9 at Liuhe (Figure 3.6; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Shanxi dui et al. 2003; Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: no. 62). There is also evidence from two sites in Shandong, such as a stone adze found at Liangchengzhen (两城镇), Rizhao (日照), which does not come from a secure context, and a hair ornament from burial M14 at Zhufeng (朱封), Linqu (临朐), which compares with two openwork ornaments from Sunjiagang (Figure 3.7; Liu Guoyuan 1972; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Shandong gongzuodui 1990; Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: nos. 65, 67).

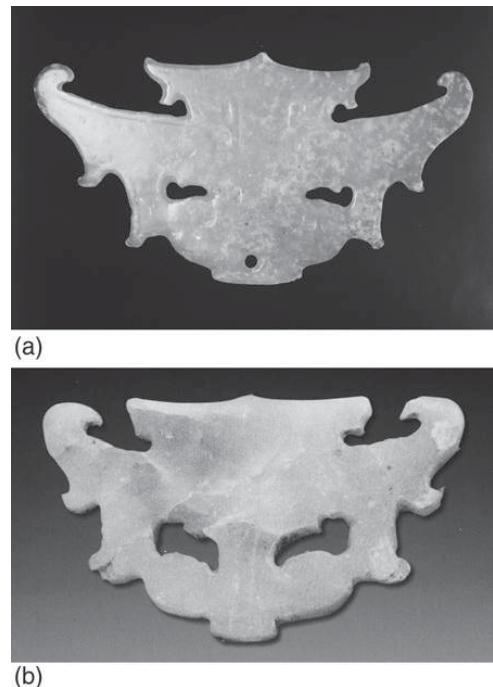
The find contexts in north-central China can be dated to about 2000 BCE, indicating that they are contemporary with the Middle Yangzi cemeteries. Here they appear in higher quantities and are consistently deposited in urn burials, which suggests that the Middle Yangzi was where the jades originate.

By contrast, the depositional contexts in north-central China appear less consistent. While all jades have also been found in burials, they stand out from among the burial assemblages. It is possible to argue that jades found to the north ended up there as the result of long-distance interactions with the Middle Yangzi.

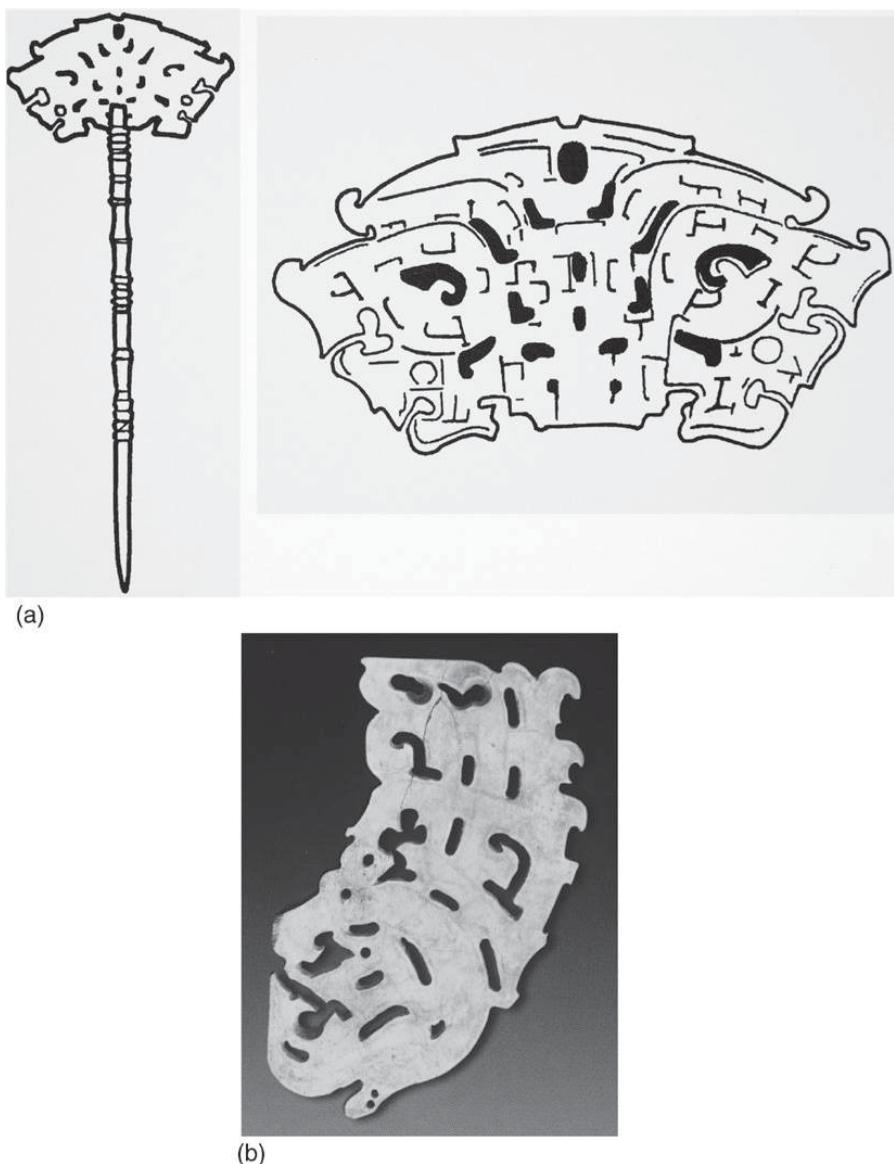
It cannot be a coincidence that the types that formed part of these interactions were deposited intact in the Middle Yangzi. Could it be that their intact deposition in the urn burials consciously indexes the relationships formed through the interactions in which they changed hands? Were the few deceased persons actually buried with such objects involved in these interactions, leading to the deposition of these jades in their burials, or was the involvement of the community in these interactions thrown into relief during the funeral by depositing these jades? These questions defy answers but hint at the strong possibility that the pre-depositional life history of these objects was of significance and may have governed the ways in which they were treated upon burial. As such, they differ markedly from the treatments other jades received.

Fragmentation and Transformation of Objects

A second category of treatment upon final deposition is the deliberate destruction of objects followed by their often incomplete interment. This practice is most clearly evident for the tools from Zaolingang. It is the merit of the report of this site (Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan 1999) that it illustrates each individual fragment. Conversely, fragments from Xiaojiawuji and Liuhe cannot be fully assessed due to their exclusion from the reports and other publications. Many fragments from Zaolingang appear to be of tools, as evident from the cutting edges and perforations (Figure 3.5c–d). In most cases a single fragment is left without the chance of refitting it to other fragments in the same burial or in another burial. In other cases, parts of an axe or adze or knife could be refitted from fragments from the same burial but some pieces remain missing. Then, in other cases, almost the entire tool could be refitted.



3.6. Comparison of (a) a jade ornament from tomb M22, Taosi, Xiangfen, Shanxi, width 6.4 cm (after Gu Fang 2005, vol. 3: 47), with (b) a jade ornament from urn W9, Liuhe, Zhongxiang, Hubei, width 4.1 cm (after Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: cat. no. 62).



3.7. Comparison of (a) a jade hair ornament from tomb M202, Zhufeng, Linqu, Shandong, length 9 cm (after Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: 16, fig. 17), with (b) a jade 'dragon' from tomb M14, Sunjiagang, Li Xian, Hunan, length 9.1 cm (after Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: cat. no. 65).

The ways in which most pieces were broken points to the strong possibility that their destruction was deliberate. This impression is further amplified in light of the many surviving pieces of jade from sites across China without any such damage, proving the durability of this material. Maybe the occurrence of such deliberately destroyed pieces is akin to the processes of fragmentation and enchainment championed by John Chapman (2000 *inter alia*).

Chapman has shown for the prehistory of south-eastern Europe that broken pieces of pottery, figurines and skeletons may not have come about by accident but were the outcome of deliberate fragmentation (Chapman 2000). Each piece of the broken object ‘stands not only for the rest of the artefact but [for] both persons concerned with the exchange’ (Chapman 2000: 37). People became connected to other people through the broken objects in a process that Chapman calls ‘enchainment’. This notion of enchainment of people through fragmentation may be of some use in the study of the late Neolithic Middle Yangzi jades.

According to Chapman and Gaydarska (2007: 176) an argument for deliberate breakage is facilitated by the occurrence of five kinds of contextual conditions, not all of which have to be present simultaneously, but all could point to deliberate breakage: ‘(1) inter-site re-fits ...; (2) intra-site re-fits between closed contexts ...; (3) orphan fragments from settlements with total excavation, good recovery methods and other caveats ...; (4) orphan fragments from closed contexts, plus other caveats ...; and (5) unambiguous evidence of further treatment of fragments on the fragment break ...’. In the case of the Middle Yangzi sites discussed, the fourth condition matches the archaeological evidence best as most fragments come from the closed contexts of urn burials and there are very few potential refits. Unfortunately, no inter- or intra-site refits are present. Given that we are dealing with closed contexts and the high durability of the material in question, deliberate fragmentation seems most likely.

While there is strong evidence pointing to deliberate breakage, there is the possibility that fragmentation especially of the tools may have been the result of heavy usage. According to observations made by Zhang Xuqiu, the objects from Zaolingang do not appear to exhibit any traces of use and wear and were consequently interpreted as non-utilitarian items (see Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: nos. 142–4, 146–8, 150, 151, 153, 154). Accidental breakage from use is thus not in evidence. However, it is possible that these tools were ritually killed or sacrificed, as in the cases observed by Grinsell (1960). As Chapman rightly observes (2000: 25), sacrificed or ritually killed objects can usually be fully restored and all parts come from the same context. This is not the case with the tools from Zaolingang.

It might thus be possible that deliberate fragmentation occurred and that its purpose was to enchain relationships between people. However, I would not go as far as Chapman and argue that enchainment necessarily predicates the existence of *dividual personhood* (Brittain and Harris 2010), i.e. a situation in which, as in the cases Chapman studies, ‘fragments of pots and figurines were part of the person given away to another in *partible relations* between *dividual persons*’ (Fowler 2010: 373). While fragmentation may lead to enchainment, enchainment may not lead to the *dividual*. In light of the specific contexts of

funerary deposition at Zaolingang and indeed across the Middle Yangzi, certain objects may have been subjected to fragmentation in order to enchain the survivors and the deceased. It is possible to imagine a scenario in which the objects were smashed upon burial and the fragments distributed among the community of mourners while retaining one or several pieces for deposition with the deceased. Enchainment may then have been used in ‘presencing ... absent fragments’, absent people, i.e. the deceased, and the corresponding social relationships (Chapman and Gaydarska 2007: 104, 111).

Deliberately destroyed objects, fragments and their deposition in burials may thus embody the bereavement of the community in relation to some of the deceased, as not all were buried with jades. The significance of this act of enchainment also lies in the use of jade, which is very hard and difficult to break. Much effort went into deliberately destroying these objects, which is especially noteworthy given the potential rarity and high value of jade in the Middle Yangzi region.

The practice of fragmentation is not limited to tools from Zaolingang but also extends to other types of objects, which are clearly connected to other regions, especially the Lower Yangzi, and which may have been the jade source for the Middle Yangzi. These types of jade, such as tubes (*cong*) and discs (*bi*), are often incomplete, damaged or in fragments.

For instance, discs with a circular perforation in the centre, customarily referred as *bi*, are a typical shape found complete surrounding the body in burials in the Lower Yangzi from the late fourth to the third millennium BCE. A number of discs were found in the Middle Yangzi, for example the ones collected at Luojiabailing and excavated from Sunjiagang burials M9 and M14 (Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: nos. 134–7). They possibly stem from the Lower Yangzi or were inspired by discs from there or intermediate areas. Some of these are heavily damaged, and from Zaolingang there is evidence pointing to deliberate fragmentation (Figure 3.5b; Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan 1999: 50, fig. 35:5). Other types, such as the ‘handle-shaped’ object collected at Xiaojiaowuji, remained complete. The object’s tiered reliefs are suggestive of tubes and other jades from the Lower Yangzi (Jingzhou Bowuguan 2008: no. 86). Pieces of a related shape with similar tiered relief decoration have come from sites there, such as Fuquanshan (福泉山) in Shanghai (上海), dated to the third millennium BCE (Shanghai shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 2000: colour pl. 25:1).

Another example is the square tube with circular perforation through the body conventionally known as *cong*. One complete example was collected at Dujiagang (渡家岗), Anxiang (安乡), Hunan, and dated to the period of the cemeteries, about 2000 BCE (Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: no. 138). While the basic shape is similar to those from the Lower Yangzi (Gu Fang 2005: vol. 8, p. 75), the way it was carved on the outside is unusual and not known in that

region. It may be a local appropriation of this type of object. Problematically, the attributed date can be called into question given the lack of archaeological context. Hence, this *cong* will be excluded from the discussion.

Two fragments of tubes, corners to be precise, were found in urns WM38 and WM41 at Zaolingang (Figure 3.5a; Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan 1999: 50, fig. 35:7; Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: no. 139), suggesting that they were smashed to pieces. While these two fragments were buried without further alterations, there is the possibility that others were fashioned into jade faces, such as the well-published example from Xiaojiaiwuji W6 (Figure 3.2b). This suggestion was first made by Hayashi Minao (Hayashi 1998). Although intriguing, this suggestion requires further substantiation. If correct, it might also apply to the comparable jade face in the British Museum collection mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The interesting fact is that not only tubes but also the discs and other ‘imports’ or objects inspired by imports were deliberately destroyed and continued (and/or ended) their lives as fragments after this act of destruction. Tubes, though ultimately derived from or inspired by a source considerably distant, were reappropriated by people in the Middle Yangzi for specific local uses.

The suggestion of the typologists that the tubes and discs are ‘ritual jades’ based on their uses in Lower Yangzi burials and mentions in late first-millennium BCE texts can thus be discounted for the Middle Yangzi, where they were broken into pieces and channelled into new uses and meanings possibly some time prior to burial or on the occasion of one. Despite earlier fragmentation they were treated like other fragments upon burial and were consequently fully incorporated into local burial customs. This suggestion challenges the often-held assumption that similarities in jades and decorations between regions signal ‘shared belief systems and ritual actions’ (Liu 2003: 8). Investigated from an object-biographical perspective, such statements must be questioned as objects undergo transformations in meaning when leaving specific contexts and entering into new ones, as has indeed been often shown (Gallardo et al. 1999; Hamilakis 1999; Peers 1999; Saunders 1999; Seip 1999).

SUNJIAGANG

The (re-)appearance of jades in the Middle Yangzi by around 2000 BCE was part of a number of transformative processes, as seen in the above-mentioned abandonment of enclosed sites and the introduction of jades thereafter. The impetus for jade and carving technology may well have been an outside stimulus. However, Middle Yangzi craftsmen soon developed their own idiom with the consequences already discussed. Jade transformed people and burial practices and were transformed once more upon burial. The evidence from the three cemeteries of Xiaojiaiwuji, Liuhe and Zaolingang is consistent. But

there is an exception to the rule in the form of the cemetery of Sunjiagang in Li Xian, south of the Yangzi in Hunan (Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Li xian wenwu guanlichu 2000).

Thirty-three burials were found closely distributed across a 400-sq.-metre area. Unlike the other cemeteries, all burials are rectangular pits, just 20 to 40 cm below the topsoil, and oriented approximately east–west. Due to lack of skeletal remains, the head end could only be estimated as being towards the west based on the distribution of the jades. The burials measure between 2 and 2.6 metres in length and less than 1 metre in width.

The excavators initially suggested an early to mid-Shijiahe Culture date based on the ubiquitously present ceramics (Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Li xian wenwu guanlichu 2000). This would date these jades earlier than those found elsewhere. However, Zhang Xuqiu plausibly suggests a date equivalent to Xiaojiawuji, Zaolingang and Liuhe based on the appearance of similar jades and a reassessment of the ceramic evidence. He argues that many shapes match those found in the phase at Xiaojiawuji corresponding to the cemetery (Jingzhou bowuguan 2008: 6).

Jades were found in seven out of the thirty-three burials. From the illustrated burials we gain the impression that these were mostly found at one end of the burial, possibly the head end. Their similarities to those from the other three cemeteries are uncanny. Pins, a bird pin, small plaques, *huang* and a spindle whorl are all well known from the other sites and show that these jades belong to the same Middle Yangzi River group. Some types, such as the discs (*bi*), are more numerous here than at other sites and betray connections with the Lower Yangzi. Most striking, however, are the two openwork ornaments that incorporate animals in profile: a bird and a coiled creature, often identified as phoenix and dragon (Figure 3.7b). These are very similar to the openwork ornament from Zhufeng in Shandong, as mentioned above. Notably absent are human/beast and tiger heads, cicadas as well as tools. But Sunjiagang shows even further departures from the other cemeteries. The deceased are buried in pits and these contain not only jades but also pottery. Another difference is the absence of fragments at Sunjiagang.

The example of Sunjiagang is important as it indicates that the changes that resulted in urn burials becoming the dominant burial custom and the deposition of often fragmented jades may have been a localised phenomenon, likely restricted to the areas north of the Yangzi. While the overall societal developments, including the abandonment of enclosed settlements, were similar north and south of the river, the subsequent developments in the southern regions may have diverged from those to the north of the river. The strongest connecting features suggesting sustained contact between north and south of the river is the ceramic evidence and the appearance of jades.

CONCLUSION

While it is true that the jades allowed for people to be singled out in a new language of adornment, regarding the occurrence of jades as a simple reflection of status or societal hierarchies, such metonymic reading of the archaeological evidence is insufficient to comprehend this material's place as a burial good (cf. Whitley 2002). After all, the funerary activities of the community of the living played an important role in shaping the identity of the deceased through decisions about what was to be interred and what not (cf. e.g. Parker Pearson 1993, 1999). Hence, the objects themselves reflect the complex relationships between the deceased and survivors. But the objects also have trajectories of their own, which converged upon burial. Despite placement in the urns, I have shown the ways various categories of jades were treated differently and that this treatment is dependent upon their pre-depositional biographies.

Importantly, this study has shown that categories of meaning are not fixed. Studying objects from a biographical angle highlights contextual relationships. For instance, *bi* discs and *cong* tubes are usually regarded as 'ritual jades', thereby disregarding the contexts they were found in. According to Liu Li (2003: 8), for example, 'the few shared jade forms [including *bi* and *cong* distributed across China] and decorative motifs may have resulted from diffusion, borrowing, and amalgamations among regional belief systems'. Transmission of objects is regarded as equivalent to transmission of meanings. This, however, requires contextual study of each individual case where possible and cannot be simply assumed from the occurrence of the objects themselves. The *cong* tubes and *bi* discs in the Middle Yangzi are a pertinent case in that they show the ways objects from the outside are assimilated into a local regime of beliefs, probably having lost the meanings originally attached to them. Their deliberate destruction highlights this. This adds another layer to the distinction between objects owned and used by the deceased in life and objects used during the funeral (e.g. Flad 2001).

Fragmentation is an important issue in an object's life history, as shown here. But it is often impossible to study because of the preoccupation with complete pieces in the Chinese archaeological literature. Chinese archaeology potentially would be able to add to the increasing numbers of discussions of fragmentation and it is hoped that this study provides an additional starting point to the studies briefly discussed in what follows.

Few other studies have engaged with the deliberate destruction of objects in China. The best known case is that of the deliberate destruction of bronze weapons in burials in the Western Zhou (西周) period (c. 1050–771 BCE), for example at the cemetery of Beiyao (北窑) near Luoyang (洛阳), Henan (Luoyang shi wenwu gongzuo dui 1999: 367–8, 373). Over 95 per cent of the weapons were rendered unusable before burial, which also occurs at other Western Zhou sites in Shaanxi, Henan, Shanxi, Beijing (北京) and Gansu (甘肃),

hence it is seen as a ‘Zhou’ (周) custom instead of ‘Shang’ (商) custom, for example (Zhang 2005, Jing 2006). Von Falkenhausen (2006: 183) rightly considers the ethnic interpretation of this practice as not fully convincing. The destruction of objects prior to burial is also documented for the late Shang period (c. 1300–1050 BCE), as shown by Zhai Shengli (2011). He lists the evidence for the deliberate destruction of earthenware and bronze vessels from tombs in Anyang (安阳), Henan, as well as sites in Hebei (河北), Shanxi and Hunan, which he considers an extension of Neolithic practices (see below). Because this practice occurs only occasionally and is not widespread, Zhai suggests that it is that of a ‘non-Shang tribe’. Be that as it may, the deliberate destruction of objects in Bronze Age burials needs to be studied more thoroughly than has been done to date.

For the Neolithic period, the only study of the deliberate destruction of objects was conducted by Huang Weidong (2003), who assembled the scant evidence for destruction and burial of objects in the Middle and Lower Yellow River, the Middle Yangzi and Ningxia (宁夏) and Hong Kong (香港) for the period from the early Yangshao (仰韶) period to the richer evidence for the middle and late Yangshao periods (c. 5000–3000 BCE). He divides the available archaeological evidence into three cases, ranging from employing the destroyed objects as burials goods, as adornment for the deceased, to the notion that they were used to pay homage to the deceased. Within each category he finds complete but destroyed pieces or parts of pieces. He largely discusses ceramics and the occasional lithic, but does not include jade.

In Huang’s view, the destruction had the purpose of ‘avoiding evil influence’, which he considers a notion that continued until today, and which was invoked by the writers on the Shang and Zhou cases. An alternative interpretation is that the objects were destroyed in order to become suitable for use by the deceased. In any case, the practice of destroying objects was not widely distributed, which Huang also sees as a result of a lack of attention to the possibility of such phenomenon. While Huang’s study is of great importance, as it draws attention to the important issues of fragmentation and intentional breakage, his interpretations appear too ambitious for the time span of several thousands of years and the large territory covered. More nuance and an extension of observations to include other materials, such as jade, is necessary.

In closing, the study of fragmentation in the Chinese archaeological record is in its infancy but, as the cited preliminary studies and this chapter show, a redirection of focus from the whole to the part has great potential to reveal additional complexities of meaning for depositional contexts, such as burials. As demonstrated in this study, the degree of fragmentation may reflect the different life histories of objects, prior to their final deposition, upon which their differential trajectories converged.

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NOTE

¹ The author acknowledges the 2015 discovery of jades at the locus of Tanjialing (谭家岭) at Shijiahe (Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2016). While the report is too preliminary to merit inclusion in this study, yet in keeping with it, it appears that five urns, dated to the 'Post-Shijiahe Culture', were found and that these contained a number of jades of types similar to those discussed in this chapter as well as jade (raw?) material, which might well refer to fragments.

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FOUR

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SALT IN ANCIENT CHINA FROM THE LATE NEOLITHIC TO THE HAN DYNASTY

Pochan Chen

INTRODUCTION

Salt is an indispensable material for maintaining human health. Western scholars have widely suggested that the production, trade and consumption of salt played an important role in social complexity, civilizational development and cultural interactions in ancient societies (Adshead 1992; Bloch 1963; Multhauf 1978). Chinese historians and archaeologists also claim that salt was an important commodity critical to the economies of early states in ancient China (Chang 1976, 1980; Liu and Chen 2004; Wu and Li 1997; Zeng 1998[1936]). Studies of salt and its importance to ancient China have focused primarily on governmental salt administration due to the abundant historical records about its trade and exchange. Chinese scholars have proposed that salt was an important material strategically because its production and taxation were crucial to the financing and politics of the state.

The purpose of this chapter is to reconsider the role that salt played in the early history of China by shaping the discussion around the “social life” of the material. By examining the production, distribution and consumption of salt recorded in the archaeological record, epigraphic evidence and pictorial representations, this chapter suggests that the social meaning of salt underwent change from the late Neolithic to the Han Dynasty.

THE BIOGRAPHIC AND GENEALOGICAL APPROACH TO THINGS

The Appadurai volume, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, sets a milestone in research about commodities (Appadurai 1986). Although the notion of commodities was the major focus, such discussions are relevant to every tangible or even intangible “thing.” As Kopytoff reminds us, commoditization of a thing is a process that we should explore as a “cultural biography” (Kopytoff 1986). Kopytoff argues that a biographical approach can make what is obscure salient. Abundant information about a thing can be found by exploring its life history. The metaphor of “biography” can be approached in two slightly different ways. Like a biography of a human life, the first type would depict how a thing enters and leaves different contexts of use. This is somewhat like the conception of “*chaîne opératoire* (literally ‘operational chain’ or ‘sequence’)” (Lemonnier 1986, 1992) or “formation process” (Schiffer 1996[1987]) in the archaeological theory. Although *chaîne opératoire* focuses on the sequences of production and the formation process mainly on use and post-use contexts, they agree that research on the entire life of a single artifact from its birth to death (or after-death or even rebirth) is useful and productive.

The second type of biographic approach focuses on a group of certain things or material, rather than a specific object. It is more complex than the first meaning since it covers much longer duration and wider spatial distribution. In the diachronic span, their life histories and meanings could be continuously changing. Even in the same time period, across vast geographic areas, things’ meanings might also change when they encounter different cultures. The thing might be a complete production, but also might be materials for making other things. Therefore it might be better to call the exploration of their life history a “lineage” rather than “biography.” Taking Mintz’s classic study on sugar as an example (Mintz 1985), its time duration was across several hundred years and its geographical area covered Europe, Asia and America. What Mintz did was to trace the lineage of sugar.

The flow of commodities in any given situation according to Appadurai is “a shifting compromise between social[ly] regulated paths and competitively inspired diversions” (Appadurai 1986: 17). When we remark on a function or meaning of a thing, we are placing it within a certain period rather than discussing a fixed nature for a thing. The meaning of the thing may follow a path, but it also may be diverted and become a new path. The movement between a path and a diversion engages with ideas about the utilization of things and value judgments made by people who use them. Thus, we cannot escape the issue of demand.

Appadurai argues that the mystery of demands is its position between desire and need (1986: 29). In research on economic anthropology and archaeology, we often simply define things as staple and/or wealth goods (D’Altroy and Earle

1985). Staple goods are those necessities, like cereals, livestock and clothing, which are large in bulk and require large-scale transportation. Because these goods are perishable, the transportation distance is relatively short. Political elites gain power and benefits through distribution and taxation of these staple goods. On the contrary, wealth goods are not necessities, but are often precious items, primitive money or currency and are imperishable and easy to transport. They can also be transported over long distances and political elites often receive power just by obtaining, displaying and exchanging goods of this type. As Veblen suggests, the “conspicuous consumption” of these valuable things is in their display, and not in their necessity (1912). “Consumption” in this use is not only assigned to the things themselves, but also designates a symbolic code (Baudrillard 1998). Bourdieu points out that people with similar social status will have similar consumption taste. People might alter their social status by accumulating capital and manipulating their consumption tastes.

In order to reconstruct the meaning of things, I will advocate that we return to every step – from production, distribution to consumption – of their contemporary societies. Douglas and Ishwerwood claim that we should not passively treat consumption as a result of social activities (Douglas and Ishwerwood 2003[1979]). Through analyses of consumption, we can understand how and why people treat a certain thing in its social context. Salt will be used as an example to illustrate the genealogy of salt as a consumed social product in ancient China.

SALT PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION IN THE LATE NEOLITHIC, SHANG AND WESTERN ZHOU PERIOD: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PALEOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Our knowledge of salt production before the Han Dynasty has increased substantially due to archaeological discoveries in the most recent decades. One region where salt production has been documented archaeologically is the Ganjing (井) Valley at the Three Gorges area (Chen 2003, Flad 2011; Flad and Chen 2013; Flad et al. 2005). Current evidence indicates a continuous salt production there from the late Neolithic Shaopengzui culture (哨棚嘴文化 ca. 3500–1800 BCE) to the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) and even later (Chen 2004; Flad 2004). Although a complete production procedure cannot be reconstructed for all periods, research indicates that salt was produced by boiling brine in ceramic vessels to form salt cakes before the Han Dynasty. The type of salt production vessel used in the Shaopengzui culture was the scallop-rimmed, pointed bottom vat. Deposits of shards of this type of pot are several meters thick at the Shaopengzui site.

Several studies on salt production vessels in the same area trace the changes in salt production techniques through time (Chen 2003a, 2008b, 2013; Flad 2005,

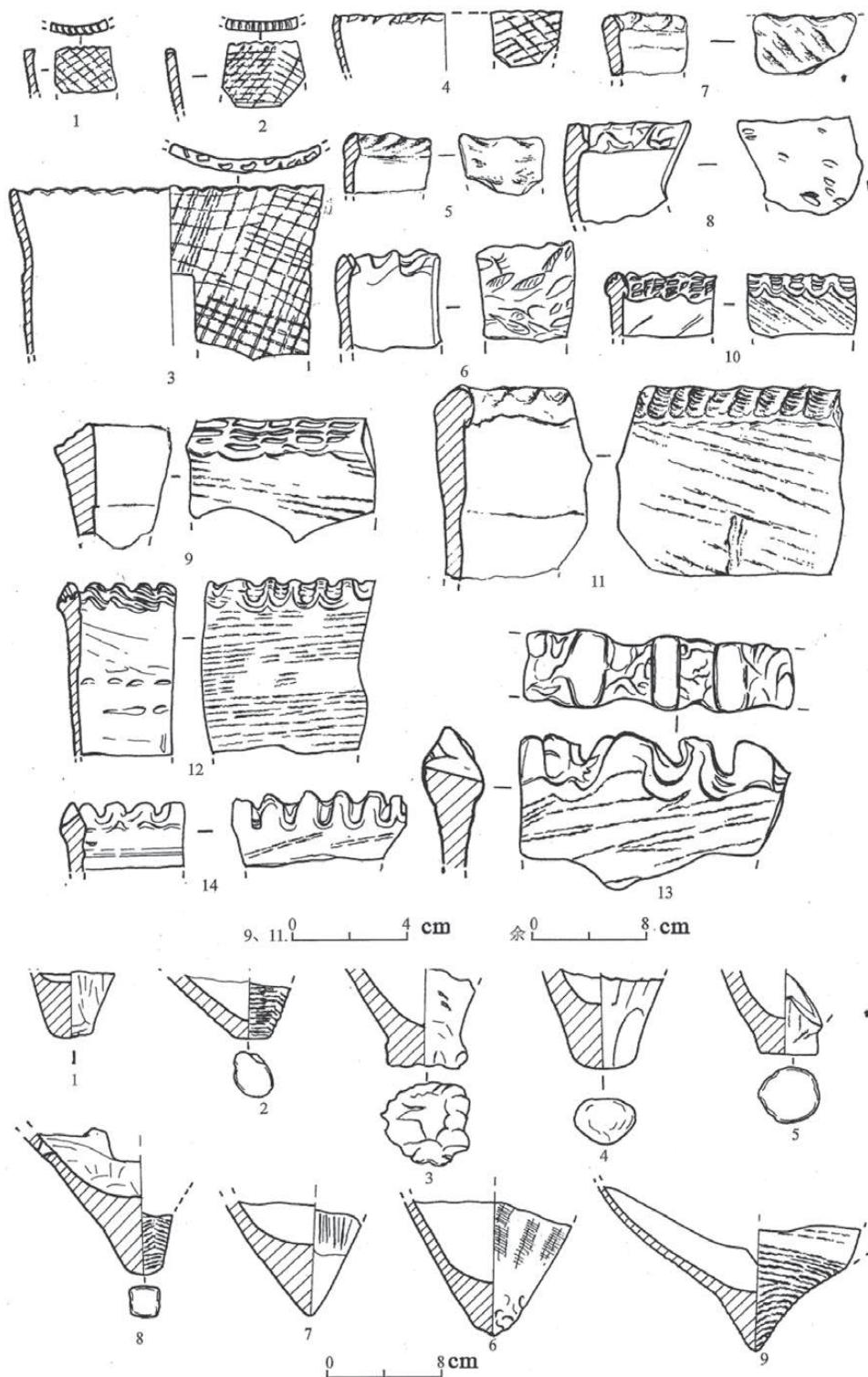
2011). The vessels experienced the following transitions: the scallop-rimmed, pointed bottom jars of the Shaopengzui culture (Figure 4.1), pointed bottom cups (ca. 1800 BCE–1000 BCE) (Figure 4.2), scallop-rimmed, rounded bottom pots in various sizes (ca. 1000–600 BCE), standardized scallop-rimmed, rounded bottom pots (ca. 600–400 BCE) and flatted-rimmed, rounded bottom pots (ca. 400–200 BCE) (Figure 4.3). The increasing standardization and specialization of salt production vessels suggest the increase of output and interregional exchange. Additionally, large quantities of animal bones were discovered at the Zhongba (中壩) site in the Three Gorges Region, indicating salted meat and fish were likely the by-products for exchange (Flad 2004, 2005). Oracle bone divination might also be employed during the salt production in the region (Flad 2008).

A second region where detailed salt production research has been carried out is in the Shandong Peninsula. Dozens of sites with large quantities of rounded bottom or pointed bottom *kuixingqi* (盔形器) or helmet-shaped vessels along the shores of ancient coastal lines in Shandong have been reported (Li et al. 2003; Fang 2004; Wang and Zhu 2006). The dates of these sites range from the late Shang to Western Zhou period. Scientific analyses indicate that these *kuixingqi* were used for salt production (Zhu and Wang et al. 2005; Cui and Yan et al. 2010). Although the sites are close to the seashore, discovery of salt brine wells and related chemical analyses show that underground salt brine was likely the major resource for salt production (Cui et. al. 2010). The concentration of the underground salt brine in the region is richer and more stable than the seawater.

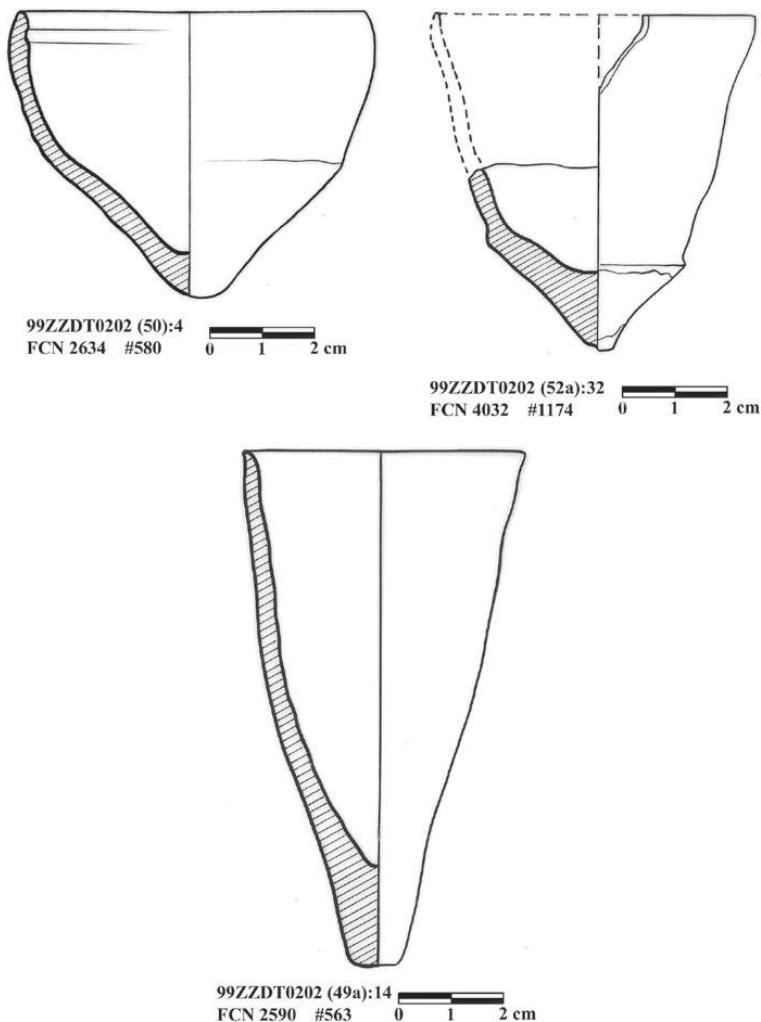
The third area of early salt production is the Xie pond (解池) in Shanxi. Due to the high concentration of brine in the Xie pond debris, we learned that ancient people directly harvested salt from the shores. Such a harvesting method does not need complex boiling facilities, making it difficult to trace early salt production in the region.

The earliest written evidence for salt is from oracle bone inscriptions at Yinxu (殷墟), the last capital of the Shang Dynasty. Salt is called *lu* (鹵) in those inscriptions, which usually means natural salt. According to this, some scholars believe that the major salt resources for the Shang royalty was natural salt from the Xie pond in southern Shanxi (Liu and Chen 2003), and some even suggest that the purpose of Wuding's (武丁) northwestern military expansion was to secure salt from the region (Yang 1992). The character *lu* was gradually transformed into *Xi* (西 west), suggesting the direction the salt came from in contrast to *chi* (斤), meaning salt from the east (Feng 2009).

Studies of oracle bone inscriptions have revealed valuable information on procurement, administration, distribution and consumption of salt during the late Shang period. One entry, for instance, records a court title called *luxiaochen* (鹵小臣), the Petty Servant of salt, who possessed his own fief



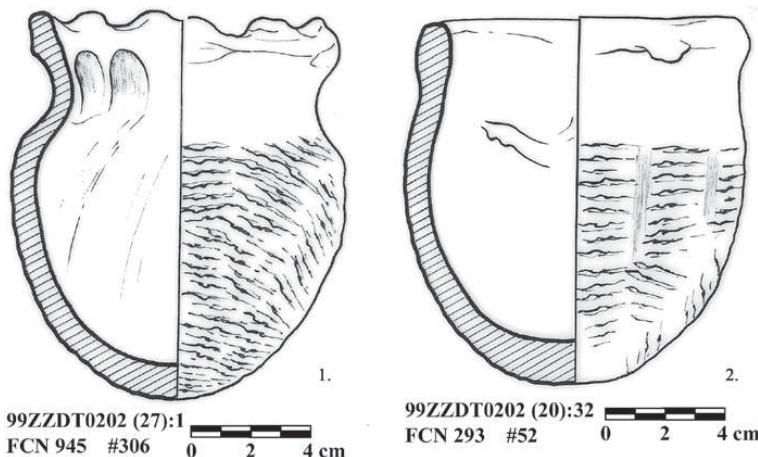
4.1. Scalloped-rim pointed bottom vats from the Zhongba site. (After Sichuan Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo et al. 2003: 617–18.)



4.2. Pointed bottom cups from the Zhongba site. (Author.)

(Guo 1977: fig. 5596). We do not have direct oracle bone evidence of salt production, but do have several entries related to salt distribution *qulu* (取鹵 acquiring salt) (Guo 1977: figs. 7022, 21429), *zhilu* (致鹵 delivering salt) (Guo 1977: 7023 reverse side, fig. 19497; Li Xueqin et al. 1985: fig. 1996) or *xianlu* (獻鹵 offering salt) (Zhongguo Shehui 2003: fig. 202), which might reflect salt distribution, probably in the form of tribute and gifts among elites. The term *ronglu* (戎鹵 taking salt via warfare or *rong* salt) (Guo 1977: fig. 7023 front side) hints that warfare is another way to possess salt or a type of salt.

Additionally, oracle bone inscriptions also reveal that salt was used as a sacrifice to ancestors along with animals or wine (Guo 1977: figs. 1441, 22246, 22294). It is often the case that ten units of salt known as *lushi* (鹵十) were used



4.3. Scalloped-rim rounded bottom pot and flatted rim rounded bottom pot from the Zhongba site. (Author.)

in this type of sacrifice. Although we do not know the exact volume of each unit, it indicates that salt was used in a fixed volume in the late Shang period.

In the Eastern Zhou period, two similar bronze inscriptions, one on the *Jinjiang ding* (晉姜鼎) (Lü 2003: 31–3) and the other on the *Rongsheng bianzhong* (戎生編鐘) (Wang 1999), describe that the lower-rank elites received salt from the higher-rank elites as a reward for obtaining precious metal from a place known as Fantang (繁湯) (Shirakawa 2004: 81–97; Li 1999: 361–4). Scholars have different opinions about whether these two inscriptions refer to the same event, but nevertheless, the two inscriptions indicate that salt was as important as metal for the elites. The third entry on a bronze inscription is on the Mian (兔) platter, which records that the king bestowed one hundred units (probably baskets) of salt to Mian (Shirakawa 2004: 469–74).

There is no direct evidence of salt consumption in the Western Zhou period. The “Tianguan” (天官) chapter of the *Zhouli* (周禮) compiled in the late Eastern Zhou, however, provides information on the responsibilities of the Yanren (鹽人), the salt officer at the Zhou royal court, and the consumption of different types of salt at various occasions. The types of salt mentioned in this entry include *kuyan* (苦鹽 bitter salt), *sanyan* (散鹽 powered salt), *xingyan* (形鹽 salt cake, possibly carved in the shape of a tiger, to be discussed later) and *piyan* (飴鹽 sweet salt), all of which were served according to the rank of users (king, empress, heir apparent and guests) and on certain occasions (regular royal meals, banquets and rituals). The corresponding responsibilities of Yanren mentioned in the *Zhouli* are quite different from salt officers who were in charge of salt production, trade and taxation in the later period. Another officer directly related to salt is the Bianren (籩人 bamboo-tray server), who served *xingyan* (salt cakes) with wheat, hemp seeds, fried rice, fried millet, dried meats, abalone and dried fishes at the royal court.

Although the above records in the *Zhouli* are a utopian construction of Zhou royal government by the Confucian School in the late Eastern Zhou, it offers us an interesting aspect of salt consumption in the Zhou time. Salt was already classified into different categories and consumed at different occasions. The classification standard, according to these texts, is its taste and crystalized shape, which may be related to the location of its source. We learn that only one type was used for receiving distinguished guests or at important court events. A further discussion of *xingyan* can be found in the thirtieth year of Xigong (僖公) in the *Zuo zhuan* (左傳), which notes that tiger-shaped salt was offered at the Lu state banquet when Zhougong Yue (周公閱) was received as a diplomat from the Zhou. Zhougong Yue politely responded that he could not accept such high-level treats since tiger-shaped salt was a symbol of someone's merit (Yang 1981: 482–3).

In summary, a primitive salt industry emerged during the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age in the Three Gorges region, the Laizhou 萊州 Bay and even the Xie Pond where abundant salt resources existed. The detectable archaeological evidence in the local single settlement was prompted by interregional trade of salt and salted products. Another issue to be addressed is the circulation of salt. Is it limited to the upper elites, or could it be passed down to common people? Liu Li and Chen Xingcan argued that salt was different from other precious goods circulated in the Shang Dynasty because common people were able to obtain them (Li and Chen 2004). Fang Hui's research comes to the same conclusion, but in an indirect way. He estimated the consumption of salt based on the entire population at the Shang capital (Fang 2004).

This question is still difficult to answer without studying the distribution mechanism of salt during the time. We can say with confidence that at least certain kinds of salt were very precious. In the inscriptions on the Jinjiang *ding* and the Rongsheng *bianzhong*, we know that salt was valued as a precious commodity, as was metal in the Western Zhou. It is questionable, however, whether the transportation and political mechanisms in place could "steadily" and "consistently" distribute salt to common people. With this in mind, I prefer to treat salt as prestige goods equivalent to metals, such as lead and tin, as well as ivory and sea shells. The acquisition and consumption of these valuable resources symbolized power and prestige.

FIRST COMPETITIVELY INSPIRED DIVERSION: EASTERN ZHOU PERIOD

There are transmitted texts on salt that date from the Eastern Zhou period. The most important record on salt of this period is in the *Guanzi* (管子).

The conversation between Guan Zhong (管仲), the Qi prime minister, and his lord Duke Huan (Huan gong 桓公) during the Spring and Autumn period are especially critical to this discussion. It mostly centers on various administrative strategies concerning natural resources, including salt when it became a commodity in daily life. In *Guanzi* “Haiwang 海王” chapter, Guan Zhong proposed to Duke Huan to tax salt instead of towers, pavilions, trees, domestic animals and capitation for registered residence since people cannot live without salt (Rickett 1998[1985]: 372–4). Guan Zhong even calculated the daily requirements of salt for males (ca. 16 g), females (ca. 10 g) and children (ca. 6 g) (Adshead 1992) and emphasized the huge benefits of salt. This historical evidence suggests that salt had entered common people’s lives during the Spring and Autumn period, at least in the coastal salt production areas, such as the Qi state. Unfortunately, we do not have historical evidence on the revenue and benefit of salt taxation to the Qi royal court and state finance as we do in the following Qin and early Han Dynasty. This is an interesting and important issue and I will come back to it in the later discussion.

States could also control other states by manipulating salt production and trade. In the *Dishu* (地數) chapter of *Guanzi*, Guan Zhong suggested to Duke Huan that he raise price by limiting salt production and selling it to adjacent states for profit, allowing a gain of forty times (Rickett 1998[1985]: 427–8). Similar arguments can also be read in the “Haiwang” chapter of *Guanzi* (Rickett 1998[1985]: 375). Aside from direct profits from trading, Qi also waived salt duty as a diplomatic means to non-salt-producing subordinate states (Rickett 1998[1985]: 343).

Records from the Qi state present a different picture of salt and its use from what was found in records of the Western Zhou period. Salt was no longer a prestige or luxury good to be circulated among elites. In salt production areas, it had become a daily life commodity for common people. Furthermore, salt became a key resource for the state economy and a means for political control. A similar case can be observed in the Jin (晉) state, which controlled the Xie pond. A debate among the court officials on the location of a new capital is recorded in the *Zuozhuan*, the sixth year of Chenggong (成公). Han Xianzi (韓獻子) argued against the mainstream idea to move the capital close to a region rich in salt because of his concern about over-dependence on natural resources (Yang 1981: 827–8).

These transmitted texts give an impression of large-scale salt production and consumption during the Spring and Autumn period. In fact, the production of salt is only limited to areas adjacent to salt resources. We have no information about the use of salt far away from these resources. The foundation of the economy in the Spring and Autumn period was agriculture and small-scale craft production. It is only in the Warring States period that a market economy

thrived with population growth and an improvement of roads and travel (Leng 2002; Zhou 2000).

Recent archaeological evidence reveals that the southern Chu state was involved in long-distance inter-state salt trade with the Ba in the Three Gorges area from the middle Spring and Autumn period. In the excavations of Yajiao (崖脚), a large cemetery at the salt production region in the Ganjing Valley, archaeologists exposed dozens of burials from the middle Spring and Autumn period to the early Warring States period. The burials follow Chu customs, including wooden chambers and special spatial arrangements of burial goods. These burial practices are identical to the contemporary burials in the core region of the Chu. The emergence of Chu-style burials at Yajiao is in exactly the same time period as when the major salt production vessels changed from scallop-rimmed, rounded bottom pots in various sizes to standardized pots mentioned above. Many scholars suggest that the Chu-style burials at Yajiao are evidence of Chu military invasions into the Ba (巴) territory in order to plunder for salt (Zhu 2003; Yu 2005; Zhao 2010). However, after considering the need for a stable salt supply in the Chu, Flad and I proposed a trade diaspora model instead of one based on a military invasion (Chen 2010; Flad and Chen 2013). The owners of Chu-style burials were Chu salt merchants who came to the Ganjing Valley to trade salt and other related commodities with the Ba people. The no. 147 bamboo slip from tomb 2 at Baoshan records that two officers were in charge of producing salt in the coastal area for the Chu king and received food and gold as reward (Hubei Jingsha 1991). The date of this slip is around 316 BCE, or after Chu conquered Yue (越) and expanded its territory to the coastal area (355 BCE). This slip not only indirectly supports our diaspora model, but also stresses Chu's involvement in direct salt production after conquering the salt-rich coastal region.

The western Qin (秦) state also acquired additional sources of salt in the process of territorial expansion. The *Huayangguozhi* (華陽國志) “Shuzhi (蜀志)” records that Qin established salt and iron offices when they reestablished Chengdu after conquering the Shu state (蜀国) (*Huayangguozhi jiaobutuzhu* 1987: 128–9). Furthermore, it also records that, later, Shu Prefecture Chief Li Bin (李冰) drilled Guangdu (廣都) salt well. Most scholars believe that Qin started a salt monopoly no later than the period when Shang Yang (商鞅) became the prime minister (390–338 BCE) and acquired Xie pond salt resources from the Wei (魏) state (Wu and Li 1997). However, there is no evidence showing that the Qin government was directly involved in salt production or a monopoly. It must be the case, as Zeng Yangfeng and Chen Zhi propose, that the Qin government profited from taxation on common merchants' production rather than direct production or monopoly (Zeng 1998[1936]; Chen 1980). This also corresponds to the recorded notices of salt in the *Jinbulu*

(金布律) in the Zhangjiashan (張家山) Han bamboo slips (Zhangjiashan 2001: 192), which will be discussed later.

Salt-related official seals and *fengni* stamp impressions of the late Warring States period have also been reported in recent years. Some seals bear late Warring States Qi-style script similar to *Xiyan* (徙鹽), which might be the title of salt transportation officials in the Qi state (Zhao 2004). Stamp impressions record salt officials of the Qin during the Warring States period and after Qin's unification. Stamp impressions indicate that Qin salt officials were widely stationed in contemporary Shangdong, Anhui, Jiangxi, Jiangsu and Zhejiang (Zhou 2003, 2005). Considering all these salt officials were in salt production areas, it appears that the Qin government taxed salt at the production end, rather than the consumption end, similar to the practice of the Qi government in the Spring and Autumn period.

Furthermore, the finances of the Qin royal court and the state were separate and had no subordinate relationships (Gao 1998). The income and expenses of the royal court were controlled by a *shaofu* (少府) whose revenues came from taxes on various natural resources. Although no direct evidence proves that a salt tax was included, the possibility is very high since Han inherited many administrative structures from Qin. As we will discuss later, salt revenues were controlled by a *shaofu* before the fourth year of Yuanshou (元狩), during Wudi's (武帝) reign in the Han Dynasty (119 BCE).

For the study of salt consumption during the Eastern Zhou period, the most interesting material is the bamboo slips of *Rongchengshi* (容成氏), now housed in the Shanghai Museum (Li 2002). They describe that under the rule of saint kings, all the disabled could overcome their physical defects by doing jobs that would help relieve their defects. In the list of cases, it mentions that *yingzhe* (癟者) (people with throat goiters) could boil brine for salt, suggesting knowledge that a goiter was the result of iodine deficiency, a property common in sea salt. Another similar case in ancient texts is in the *Guanzi* “Dishu” where Guan Zhong emphasizes the importance of salt to common people and mentions that “if one eats bad food without salt, one will get a goiter on the throat” (Rickett 1998[1985]: 427–8). These two cases prove that no later than the Eastern Zhou period, people had already noticed the physical problems caused by insufficient intake of salt.

Another source that records salt consumption comes from the Chuanshilü (傳食律), the bamboo slips from the Shuihudi (睡虎地) Qin tomb no. 11 (Shuihudi Qinmu 1990). Chuanshilü is a law that lists appropriate treatment of traveling officials according to their rank. For instance, one must offer a *li* (羈) of rice, vegetable soup and 2/22 *sheng* (升) of salt to some officials who pass the posts.

THE SECOND COMPETITIVELY INSPIRED DIVERSION:
COMMODIFICATION IN THE HAN DYNASTY

Compared to the former periods, the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) leaves more texts for us to reconstruct salt production and management. New discoveries continue to prompt us to revise some accepted conclusions. For example, scholars in the past usually believed that the government waived taxes on natural resources, including salt, based on records in *Shiji* (“Huozhiliezhuan” 貨殖列傳) and *Yantielun* (鹽鐵論) (“Cuobi” 錯幣) (*Shiji*, p. 3261; *Yantielun*, p. 57). In the “Jinbulü” (金布律) of *Ernianluling* (二年律令) on the bamboo slips discovered from Zhangjiashan (張家山), we find that the government taxed one-sixth of the profits from private salt factories in the second year of Lühou (呂后 186 BCE) (Zhangjiashan 2001: 192). This evidence suggests that the government still controlled salt by taxing the end product.

The next important question is who benefited from the salt tax. In the *Shiji* “Pingzhunshu” (平準書), we find that revenues of all natural resources, including salt, were controlled by a *shaofu* and were redistributed to the Han emperor and various kings before the fourth year of Yuanshou (元狩 119 BCE) of Wudi’s reign (*Shiji*, p. 1429). In fact, in the early Western Han period, only fifteen salt offices (around 24 percent) were under the control of the central government (Luo and Luo 1995). Leaders of local kingdoms also had the right to impose salt tax via a self-owned *shaofu* in their domains. The most famous case is from Liu Bi (劉濞), the king of Wu (吳), who recruited bold people to cast coins and boil seawater for salt (*Shiji*, “Wuwang Bi Liezhuan” 吳王濞列傳, p. 2882). The huge benefits from coin and salt production made the Wu a rich state and allowed Liu Bi to waive other taxes, which set the economic foundation for his rebellion. This evidence indicates that although salt was owned and mined by private merchants, elites still had huge benefits from salt. In other words, the elites continued to “consume” salt in another indirect way.

Private merchants profited from salt production and trade even with only one-sixth of the taxes. The *Shiji* records the name and life of rich salt merchants, such as Dongguo Xianyang (東郭咸陽) (*Shiji*, “Pingzhunshu,” p. 1428) and Daojian (刀間) (*Shiji*, “Houzhi Liezhuan,” p. 3279). Dongguo Xianyang even became one of the officials who assisted Emperor Wudi in his reform of the government monopoly of salt and iron.

As mentioned above, there is no consistent salt administration in the early Western Han period. This situation changed in the fourth year of Yuanshou of Wudi’s reign. In this year, Emperor Wudi implemented a reform of salt and iron administration, putting it under a single state monopoly system. The reform was triggered by the serious financial deficiency caused by the warfare against the *Xiongnu* (匈奴) and the increasing realization about the significance of controlling natural resources after the rebellion of seven states

led by Liu Bi. As a result of the reform, the central government retrieved salt and iron taxes directly from local elites. The management of the salt and iron tax was also shifted from *shaofu* to *danong* (大農), a government officer who administered state finances. Here we see the official transfer of salt and related revenues from the royal family to the state (*Shiji*, “Pingzhunshu,” pp. 1418, 1429). Salt became a part of state finance only after Wudi’s monopoly reform.

The second implication of the reform was the enhancement of governmental control of salt production, transportation and distribution. According to the conversations among Wudi, Kong Jin and Dongguo Xianyang (*Shiji*, “Pingzhunshu,” p. 1429), most scholars agree that salt was produced by employing commoners under government supervision. It appears that the government was more directly involved in production than we originally thought. The producers included *zu* (卒) service men, *tu* (徒) convicts and *gongjiang* (工匠) craftsmen, if we read the debates in the *Yantielun* (*Yantielun*, “Shuihan” 水旱, pp. 428–36). *Gongjiang*, *zu* and *tu* are people who can only be mobilized by the government. Through this extensive control, the Han government was able to maximize revenues from salt.

The local salt administrative offices were the major institutions that controlled the production and distribution of salt. These salt offices are under the *Danong* of the central government in the Western Han, but were transferred to local governmental jurisdiction in the Eastern Han. According to transmitted texts, such as *Hanshu* (漢書), *Houhanshu* (後漢書), *Shuijingzhu* (水經注) and *Huayangguozhi*, bamboo slips from *Yiwan* (尹灣) tombs and seals and lutes, scholars are able to discover at least fifty salt offices in the Han Dynasty (Yan 1961; Yang 1978; Chen 2006). Most salt offices were established in salt production areas and a few in transport hubs, indicating their major functions.

We also have pictorial evidence of salt production techniques in the Han Dynasty. Archaeologists have discovered several Eastern Han terracotta bricks that vividly represent the salt production procedure. All these bricks have a common set of elements – a salt well in the lower left, a boiling stove and a long pipe connecting these two facilities (Gao 1987: figs. 10–14) (Figure 4.4). The salt boiling stove is rectangular with one side higher and with five round iron pans placed on the top of it. Recently, archaeologists have discovered an inscribed complete large iron pan at Pujiang (蒲江) County, Sichuan Province. This corresponds to salt boiling pans illustrated on the bricks (Hou 2002, 2003). If we go back to the Ganjing Valley, all rounded bottom pots and other associated salt production features disappeared in the Han Dynasty. Instead, many long rectangular “dragon kilns” emerged. Through comparative studies, scholars believe that these “dragon kilns” are the salt stoves illustrated in the Han terracotta bricks (Chen 2003b; Sun 2003).



4.4. Salt production terracotta relief from the Eastern Han Dynasty. (From Gao 1987, pl. 12.)

Doubtlessly, salt was a common seasoning in the Han Dynasty. The food recipes discovered in the Huxishan (虎溪山) Han tomb use salt as one of the seasonings (Hunansheng Wenwu 2003). Various historical documents also mention the applications of salt in pickled vegetables, sauces and fermented soy beans (Wang 1996). The posts also offer salt to traveling officials, according to *Ernianliling*, “Chuanshilü” (傳食律) (Zhangjiashan 2001: 164), similar to the practice in the Qin Dynasty. *Ernianliling*, “Cilü” (賜律) also regulated salt as part of awards given to some officials along with rice, meats and wine (Zhangjiashan 2001: 173). Bamboo slips from Juyan (居延漢簡) record that salt was allocated as part of a salary to soldiers in northwest frontier locations (Lao 1960, slips 286.12 and 254.25).

Common people could purchase salt from markets and the price probably varied according to the situation. Generally speaking, salt prices were quite low most of the time, only one-tenth the price of rice recorded in the bamboo slips from Juyan (Lu 1992). Even so, salt prices fluctuated due to warfare or inconvenience of transport. The *Houhanshu*, “Yufu Gaizang Liezhuan” (虞傅蓋臧列傳) records that the salt price rose twenty times during the invasions of the Qiang (羌) people (*Houhanshu*, “Yufu Gaizang Liezhuan”: 1870).

Salt was also treated as medicine in the Han Dynasty. It was widely used for curing skin whiteness, wounds, scorpion stings, burns on the skin (Mawangdui 1979; English translation and related research can be seen in Harper 1998), eye aches (Gansusheng and Wuweixian 1975, slip 16) and even horse coughs (Lao 1960, slip 155.8).

The other two functions of salt were related to ritual and metallurgy. Salt was used with animals, millet and wine in various ritual occasions, as is widely recorded in the *Juyanhanjian* (Lao 1960, slip 10.39), *Houhanshu*, “*Liyishang*” (禮儀上) (3119) and “*Jisishang*” (祭祀上) (3162). The ritual function of salt might be traced back to the Bronze Age period. Wang Fu’s (王符) *Qianfulun* (潛夫論), “*Shigong*” (實貢) states the use of proper and less valuable things for creating better results, and included using salt in metallurgy (*Qianfulun*, “*Shigong*,” pp. 65–6). In this case, salt was no longer considered something with equivalent value to that of metal, as it was in the Shang period.

FROM PRESTIGE GOODS TO COMMODITIES – THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SALT

As discussed above, a lineage of salt in ancient China was created from the late Neolithic period to the Han Dynasty. As Appadurai argues, the flow of things shifts between “socially regulated paths” and “competitively inspired diversions.” The problem is how we are able to recognize the “socially regulated paths” and “competitively inspired diversions,” especially when our research object is salt in the ancient time. We have already reviewed recently discovered evidence of salt production, distribution and consumption and have learned different views about salt use and its role in ancient China.

As mentioned above, many scholars believe that salt is an important resource in the formation of early Chinese civilization. This argument derives from the idea or hypothesis that redistribution of salt was a means of political control over common people. According to oracle bone and bronze inscriptions, salt was treated as a prestige good and circulated among elites as gifts. Obtaining, exchanging and consuming salt in various ways symbolized the power of elites, just like metals and other precious goods in this time. In other words, salt played an important part in forming socio-economic and symbolic networks in early Chinese civilization.

Scholars who emphasize the distribution of salt to common people hold to the argument that people biologically cannot live without salt; therefore, governments can strategically control salt for political gain. This proposal can be revised based on cases of modern physiology and ethnography. The biological function of salt is to stimulate the heart, balance body fluids and keep the nervous system working (Denton 1982). Scholars have proposed different estimates of necessary salt intake per person per day, ranging from 0.7 g (Keslin 1964), 3 g (Adshead 1992), 0.5–4 g (Andrews 1983), 8–10 g (Andrews 1983), 15 g (Brown 1980) and 5–20 g (Multhauf 1978). If we exclude salt intake from our natural food, the estimate still varies from 2–5 g (Bloch 1963) to 4–5 g (Dauphinee 1960). Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs), published by the Food and Nutrition Board with reference to many other experiments,

estimate that the minimum average requirement of sodium chloride for adults is 300 mg per day and 500 mg as a safe minimum intake if considering the wide variation of patterns of physical activity (Food and Nutrition Board 1989). This intake substantially exceeds the daily diets of people in the United States. We can even see in some cases where adding extra salt to food is treated as a taboo (Kroeker 1941; Neumann 1977). These huge differences might be related to individual physical condition (race, gender or age), environment (temperature or humidity), degree of labor intensity and other culture-related factors. I argue that aside from a small portion of our physical requirement, most salt we take every day is influenced by cultural or psychological motives.

Many scholars use “addiction” to explain why people make an effort to search for salt (Adshead 1992; Bloch 1963; Denton 1982). Recent experiments on mice indicate that the stimulation of salt is similar to drug addiction, as secretions appear right after taking salt and before actually absorbing it (Liedtke et. al. 2011). In other words, the thirst for salt is mainly created by the demand for its flavor and is increased by difficulty of access to salt. In some ethnographic data, we learn that many people do not add extra salt to their daily diet; instead, they exchange salt as a highly valued commodity or luxurious seasoning for their guests in banquets, especially in places without stable salt supplies (Godelier 1977; Holmberg 1950; Marcus 1984; Richards 1939). These examples tell us that although salt is treated as a necessity for modern humans, most requirements for salt among ancient people were created by cultural factors, rather than physical ones. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider salt as luxury goods like metal, ivory, shell or jade in the Neolithic and early Bronze Age in China, especially in areas without abundant salt resources.

The first example of “competitively inspired diversion” emerges during the Eastern Zhou period, probably starting from salt production areas like coastal Shandong, the Xie Pond and the Three Gorges region. Large-scale production and advanced transportation satisfied people’s desire for salt and stimulated the demand. Due to the differentiation in the physical need, it is very difficult to say that the prevalence of salt was related to the imitation of the higher class by the lower class, as was the case for sugar in sixteenth-century Europe (Mintz 1985). However, we do see various applications of salt developed in this time. The strong desire for salt, accompanied by advanced trade and transportation capabilities, turned salt into a commodity from luxury goods in the beginning. Current data indicate that the government was involved in salt production or trade to a certain degree in the Qi, Chu, Qin and Jin states in the Eastern Zhou period, in Qin after unification and Western Han before salt monopoly reform. However, we should pay attention to the fact that, except for the unclear Qi case, the revenues from salt were still “consumed” by royal courts and elites. This reflected the intermediary position of salt as it moved from being luxury to common goods.

Another “competitively inspired diversion” happened after the reform of salt administration by Emperor Wu. The new monopoly policy reflected increasing revenues from the salt trade while the benefits also stimulated the distribution of salt in the empire. From the perspective of common people and while multiple applications of salt were developing, salt became a commodity which could be bought in markets like other daily necessities. From the perspective of the empire, the huge revenue became an important reserve when facing financial difficulties. Only at that time can we treat salt as an important part of state finance.

For a long time, archaeologists or economic anthropologists classified objects into either staple or wealth goods in their research about trade. From this study we can see that this categorization can change over time. Into which category should salt fall? From the physical or psychological perspective, salt should be treated as staple goods. However, it is relatively small in volume for long-distance transportation and obtaining and consuming salt was a symbol of status. Salt was even considered as a primitive currency in many historical and ethnographic cases. From this perspective, salt is much more like wealth goods. Salt may have served both as staple and as wealth goods during certain periods. It may even have had the characteristics of both categories at the same time.

Here we have traced the “life history” of salt in China in order to examine how it changed between staple and wealth goods. To achieve this goal, we reconstructed a social meaning for salt from how people used and treated this commodity, rather than directly assigning a common meaning to it. Fortunately, China has abundant historical and archaeological records in salt production and trade, making this attempt possible. What has been reconstructed in this chapter is still an incomplete picture of the social meaning of salt, but it is a first step. If the social meaning of salt changed through time, can we estimate from the quantity of salt production to gain a better understanding of the diachronic human requirements? Are we able to explore how salt was produced by specialists under the control of political elites or regular laborers? Can we study the distribution of salt based on the study of salt production vessels? Future research needs to be done to explore these additional social meanings of salt.

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FIVE

A DIVERGENT LIFE HISTORY OF BRONZE WILLOW-LEAF-SHAPED SWORDS OF WESTERN ZHOU CHINA FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE TENTH CENTURY BCE

Yan Sun

THE OBJECT AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

Willow-leaf-shaped swords are a distinctive bronze weapon type dating from the late second millennium to the tenth century BCE, or during the late Shang and Western Zhou periods in ancient China. Their full name, *liuyexing qingtong duanjian* (柳叶形青铜短剑), is a modern definition given by Chinese archaeologists based on its distinctive morphology, the slender narrow blade resembling a willow leaf. A raised spine is usually featured on the blade and tapers to a sharp pointed end. Typological studies often categorize these swords into several sub-types based on morphological variations that intend to construct a temporal diagram and trace the lineage of a particular sub-type (Jiang 1996; Tian 2013; Tan 2015). Consequently, scholars differ in their classifications of swords and trajectories of particular kinds of swords. To avoid such confusion, the willow-leaf-shaped sword in discussion in this chapter refers to the one that lacks a cross guard between the flat grip and the blade and is in use primarily from the eleventh century to the tenth century BCE. To use this type of sword, a wooden hilt would have been attached to the short grip that was cast integrally with the slender blade. Occasional perforations or teeth on the grip are technical features designed to strengthen the fastening of the wooden hilt. The sword without the wooden hilt typically ranges from 20 to 30 centimeters in length.

Concurrent in date with willow-leaf-shaped swords are bronze daggers known in modern Chinese as *duanjian* (短剑), or short swords or daggers,

which were yielded from excavations of regional bronze-using cultures that were active along the present-day Great Wall. These northern frontier style bronze daggers are characterized by an integral blade and hilt sometimes characteristically surmounted by animal-shaped and jingle pommels. Such daggers with variant stylistic presentations remained a major weapon type in the northern frontier region throughout the late Shang and entire Zhou dynastic period (Wu 2008: 17–20, 57–66, 139–54). Archaeological and art historical studies of those bronze daggers have recognized their prominent role in representing the individual and group identity of the communities in the northern frontier (Lin 1986; Linduff 1997; Wu 1985; Linduff et al. 2018: 35–71; Sun 2018: 72–145). A major stylistic distinction between willow-leaf-shaped swords and northern frontier style daggers is the lack of an integral bronze hilt in the former type. Nevertheless, both types are defense weapons used for stabbing and striking the enemy at close range during combat (Yang 2005: 75–6).

Historical accounts of bronze short swords and daggers of any type during Western Zhou times (mid-eleventh century to 771 BCE) are extremely sketchy. One rare passage in the *Zhoubenji* (周本纪), the official history of the Zhou in the *Shiji* (史记), recorded that the victorious King Wu (武王), the founder of the Zhou, used “*qingjian*” (轻剑), or a light sword, to symbolically strike the dead body of Shang King Zhou (商纣王) and his two consorts as a ceremonial gesture to claim victory (Sima Qian 1959: 124–5). Documentation of the same historical event in the *Keyin* (克殷) chapter of the *Yizhoushu* (逸周书) called the same weapon “*qinglü*” (轻吕) (Chinese Text Project 2016). The *qingjian* or *qinglü* was interpreted as the name of a sword in the *Shiji Zhengyi* (史记正义) in the early eighth century BCE (Sima Qian 1959: 125). What kind of sword the *qingjian* or *qinglü* might refer to remains largely elusive, although a few modern scholars have made attempts to explain it (e.g. Lin 1998: 39–63). The discrepancy between material evidence and historical records implies that the use of bronze swords or daggers in Western Zhou times was largely a regional and culture-specific phenomena. Bronze swords and daggers were yet to become major weapon types of the Shang and Zhou cultures in the Central Plain where the bronze *ge* (戈) dagger axes and *yue* (钺) axes were favored in battle and ritual practice.

Current archaeological evidence indicates that sporadic findings of either bronze or jade willow-leaf-shaped swords dated from the late second millennium BCE of the late Shang period were closely associated with the Sanxingdui (三星堆) culture (ca. 1750–1000 BCE), a regional bronze-using culture in the Chengdu Plain, largely in Sichuan Province in PRC. Bronze swords gained initial popularity in a small lineage polity, the Yu (弓魚) of the Western Zhou, at the end of the second millennium BCE, located in Baoji (宝鸡) west of Zhou metropolitan area near present-day Xi'an. From the Yu, the sword was likely introduced into various communities at different times and through various

means. As the following discussion will show, this type of bronze sword, after leaving its “natal homeland” or original cultural context, acquired new roles and was valued variously at different stages and in other communities during its ancient lifespan.

Previous archaeological studies on willow-leaf-shaped swords took a cultural historical approach focusing on discovering its origin in order to address the question of where and when it was “invented.” Archaeologists have spent much of their energy surveying discoveries of the swords, performing typological analyses, and debating their chronological sequences. Tentative hypotheses have been proposed since the late 1980s on the northern versus southern origin of the sword. One theory proposes that the sword was first used in an area adjacent to present-day Shaanxi and Gansu provinces, and later introduced into the Central Plain (Lu and Hu 1988: 443–5). The other theory from the 1990s proposed that the sword was invented in the Chengdu Plain contemporary with the Shang period (1600–1046 BCE), and later spread north to the Central Plain (Jiang 1996; Zhang 2008a: 196–205). Each theory was supported by archaeological evidence available at the time. Recent studies have expanded the search for the origin of the sword to regions outside the current geopolitical borders of China and have outlined different routes of transmission for the sword. They argue that the sword was introduced to China from the ancient Near East through Central Asia and eastern Eurasia, or from South Asia (Lu 1996: 719; Lin 1998; Duan 2009). These proposals are extensions of old debates on the northern or southern origin of the sword.

A full chronology for the sword is needed, as it would set up a foundation for further investigations of other aspects of the sword. However, description and subjective classification of the objects often distract archaeologists who then overlook core questions about the object, such as discerning its use, significance, and interaction with the human world. The archaeological context in these earlier studies was primarily used for dating rather than exploring the multi-dimensional life of the object. Often neither the questions nor the answers on other aspects of the object were conceptualized. The meaning and life history of the object was simplified to a short generalization without detailed analysis. In the case of the sword, for example, there are few in-depth analyses of the ways it interfaced with people, its shifting significance and function, the underlying mechanism of its transmission, and the cultural and social relations in which it participated. This is where a cultural biographical approach can bring a multi-dimensional view of the “life” of the objects on both theoretical and methodological levels.

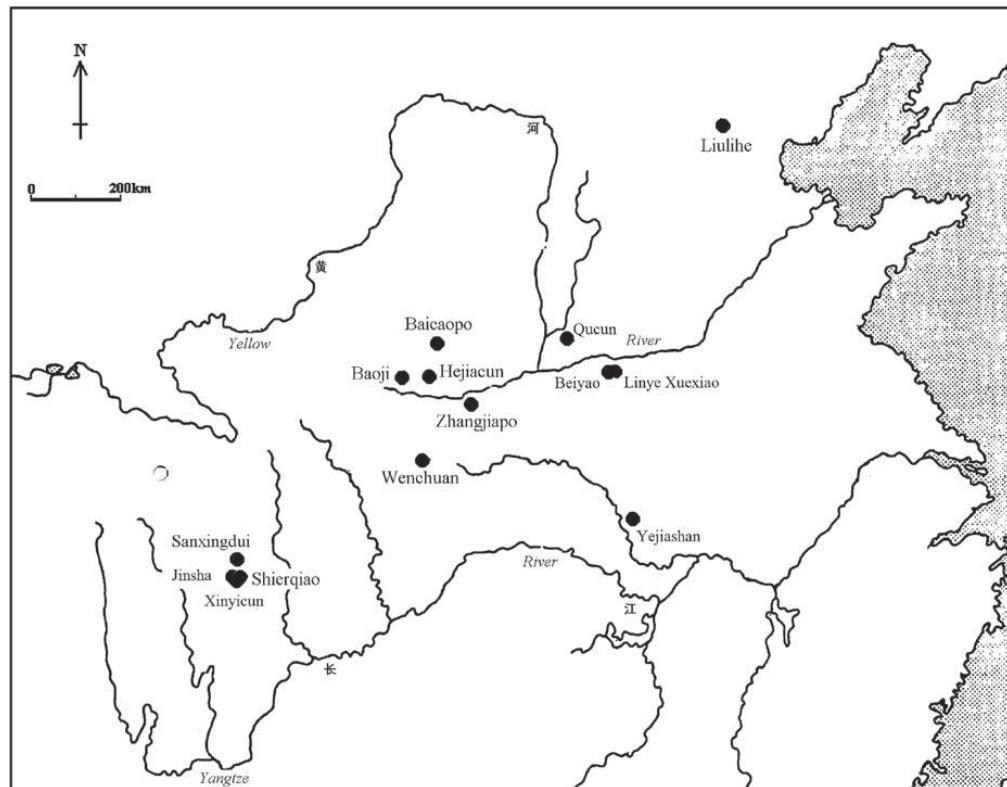
THE LIFE HISTORY APPROACH

The idea of a cultural biography of objects has gained popularity in archaeology after the publication of two influential papers on the biography of

commodities by prominent anthropologists Appadurai (1986: 3–63) and Kopytoff (1986: 64–91) three decades ago. A central idea of the biography of the object is that as people and objects gather time, movement, and change, they are constantly transformed, and these transformations of persons and objects are tied up with each other (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 169). Different from the use-life approach that focuses on the changes to the morphological or functional characteristics of an object, a biographical approach seeks to understand the way objects become invested with meaning through the social interaction in which they are caught up, and with the persons and events to which they are connected (e.g. Gosden and Marshall 1999: 169–70; Hoskins 2006: 74–84). In other words, as an object moves across time and space, and between the people, social, and cultural contexts in which it will live, the way it interacts with people will change and lead to reinterpretation and renegotiation of its meanings and values at different stages of its life history.

In light of this theory, this chapter will place the object, the willow-leaf-shaped sword, and its constituents in the object's life, the patrons and/or users, at the center of the investigation. The depositional context of the object, in this case the mortuary contexts and the inscriptions on bronzes, shall provide crucial data on material expressions of interactions and links between people and objects. As Kopytoff candidly pointed out, the biography of objects "can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure" (Kopytoff 1986: 67). A life history approach will make the sword the focus of investigation and bring forward questions about its meanings, social value, and context, as well as its interplay with human societies. These are all features that have otherwise been ignored or dodged in previous studies.

By using the life history approach, this case study hopes to increase the awareness among scholars of ancient China about the "value" of objects and material evidence and how they can facilitate our understanding of the will and power of the individual and marginalized communities that might otherwise be forgotten in history and ignored in our research. In the study of Bronze Age China, there has long been hierarchical categorization of bronzes into vessels (at the top of the list), weapons, tools, and so on. Ritual objects become synonymous with bronze vessels, for example, such terms in Chinese as "bronze vessels" (青铜器) and "ritual bronzes" (礼器) were commonly used interchangeably. This thinking has influenced archaeological thought and defined archaeological discourse in a way such that bronze vessels are given a prominent role, while bronze weapons and tools to a large degree are elided completely. This scheme essentially built an ordered value system in which some aspects or questions about the human past (such as ritual practice, elite life, wealth, and power) were more valuable and relevant than other issues, and therefore the artifacts, the material witnesses of human societies, were devalued and subsumed in this canonical way of thinking. There has been a striking discrepancy in the number of scholarly publications on bronze vessels vs. weapons

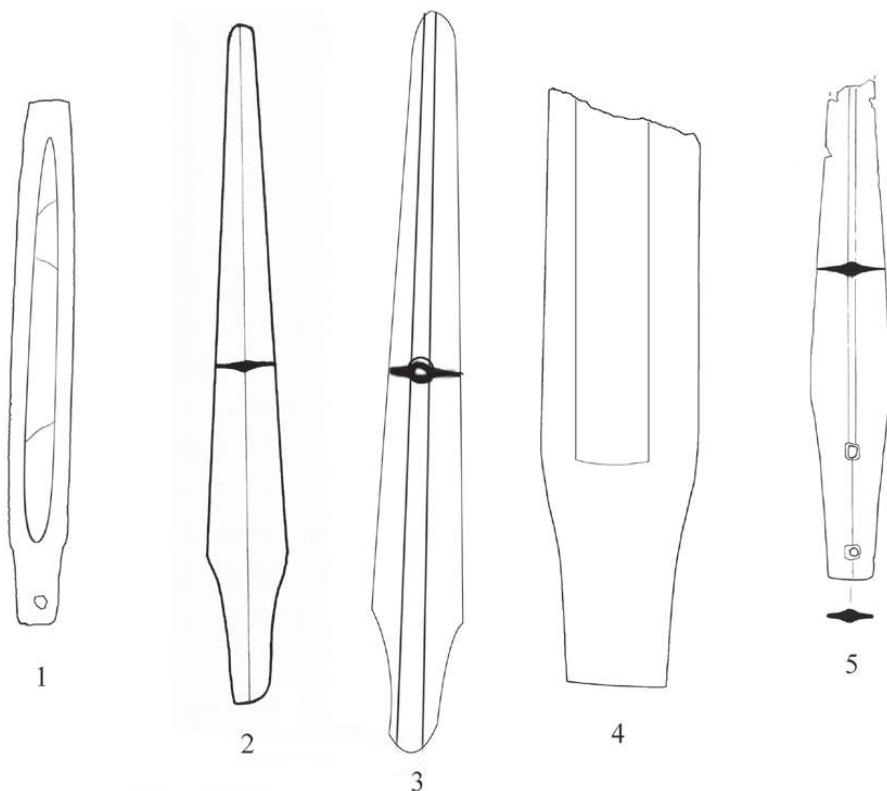


5.1. Archaeological sites yielding bronze willow-leaf-shaped swords. (Map by author.)

and tools in China. That has reinforced the assumption that weapons and tools are/were limited in value and less significant, complex, or valuable as indicators of human activity in the past. One of the aims of this case study is to rediscover the value or meaning of those “aliened” or “marginal” objects, and in doing so reveal multi-dimensional and fascinating histories of artifacts and their interactions with human societies.

EMERGENCE OF THE SWORD IN THE LATE SECOND MILLENNIUM BCE DURING THE LATE SHANG PERIOD

The earliest willow-leaf-shaped bronze swords found so far were from a couple of sites on the Chengdu Plain in the Sichuan Basin (Figure 5.1). A bronze sword, about 24 cm long, was found in what Lin called a late Shang and early Zhou stratum at the Sanxingdui site (Lin 1987). Presumably it was used as a weapon. Beyond that, little can be speculated about its social meaning or function. A discovery of a jade sword (K1: 280) from sacrificial pit no. 1 at Sanxingdui added a layer of complexity in the search for the cultural meaning of the sword (SWKY 1999: 100). Its style closely resembles that of a bronze



5.2. Jade and bronze swords from the Chengdu Plain. (5.1–5.4 redrawn by Yirui Jia.)

1. Jade sword from Sanxingdui sacrificial pit no.1. (based on SWKY 1999, plate 29.1)
2. Shierqiao (based on SWKY and CWKY 2009, p.117, fig. 87.5)
3. Xinyicun (based on Duan 1996.3, p. 42, fig. 5.3)
4. Jinsha (based on CKWY 2005, p. 78, fig. 98)
5. Hanzhong (based on Cao and Sun 2006, p. 404)

willow-leaf-shaped sword: a short flat grip with a perforation and a leaf-shaped slender body with a central narrow groove on one side and slightly bulged corresponding band on the other (Figure 5.2.1). No comparable example has been reported to provide a reliable dating reference for this jade sword. Duan Yu dates this jade sword to Phase 1 of the Yinxu culture of the fourteenth to late thirteenth century BCE based on the dating of the pit (Duan 1996). Though broken, it has a remaining length of 28.2 cm, comparable to that of the bronze sword. The stone sword was very likely made locally as the source could be a local jade mine in the northwestern part of the Chengdu Plain (Liu et al. 1999: 514). The appearance of the jade and bronze swords in the Chengdu Plain has raised several interesting questions: which kind of sword, the jade or bronze, was manufactured first? Was the jade sword an imitation of bronze swords, or vice versa? And do they represent the same type of object, although made from different materials, or should they be considered as two types of objects?

To answer these questions with confidence we need patience and more archaeological discoveries. Bronze and jade artifacts in the Sanxingdui pit were seemingly broken intentionally and burned, suggesting some sort of ritual activities before or during the deposition of the objects. The jade sword has prominent burn marks. Like many other jade objects in Pit 1, it was very likely made for ceremonial occasions. If jade and bronze swords are the same type of object, one tentative observation that can be made is that the meaning and function of the sword was transferrable between weapons and ritual paraphernalia when using different materials.

Two additional bronze swords of the late Shang period have been reported at the Shierqiao (十二桥) and Xinyicun (新一村) site (SWKY & CWKY 2009: 116–17; Jiang 1992) (Figures 5.2.2; 5.2.3). They were dated to Phase III and IV of the late Shang period, or roughly between the twelfth and mid-eleventh century BCE. These swords were probably used in ways similar to those in the Sanxingdui culture. The making of jade swords continues in the Shierqiao culture in the Chengdu Plain (ca. 1150–600 BCE). One example was recovered at the Jinsha (金沙) site, a center of the Shierqiao culture (Figure 5.2.4). It can be dated to the late Shang to early Western Zhou period, roughly the late eleventh century BCE. The sword was made of local greenish jade and is very similar in style to the jade sword from Pit no. 1 at Sanxingdui (CKWY 2005: 78).

North of the Sichuan Basin, three bronze swords of the late Shang and beginning of the Zhou period are reported in Hanzhong (汉中) region. One broken example characterized by a ridge in the center of the blade was collected in Wenchuan (文川) township of Chengdu county (Figure 5.2.5) (Cao and Sun 2006: 404). The other two were found in the same county (Zhao 2006: 208). Without archaeological context, little can be speculated about the meaning of the swords except that presumably they could have been used as weapons. The discovery of this sword, however, provides a tantalizing clue to the possible route of the transmission of the sword beyond the Sichuan Basin. Hanzhong, a basin between the Qinling Mountains (秦岭) in the north and the Micang (米仓) and Ba (巴) Mountains in the south, has been considered a critical path connecting the people and culture between the Wei River Valley (渭水流域) and the Chengdu Plain (成都平原) since ancient times. Excavations of the Neolithic Baoshan (宝山) site at Hanzhong (汉中) revealed that its ceramic artifacts exhibited similar traits to those of the Miaodigou type (庙底沟类型) of the Yangshao culture (仰韶文化) in the Wei River Valley and the Baodun culture (宝墩文化) in the Chengdu Plain (XDWX 2002: 174–6). The hybrid nature of Hanzhong's material culture was continuously present in the subsequent Bronze Age. For example, a few late Shang bronzes at Hanzhong display styles typical of the Sanxingdui culture. The triangular-blade ge, a dominant type of bronze weapon at Hanzhong, was commonly used at

the Yu state cemetery in Baoji during the early Western Zhou period. All these stylistic analogies point to an active network of cultural interaction including multiple channels and parties (Sun 2011: 626–55). Accordingly, it is not a coincidence that after its debut in the Chengdu Plain the willow-leaf-shaped sword flourished in the Yu state, centered in the western periphery of the Wei River Valley between mid-eleventh century and mid-tenth century BCE.

Different from early swords in the Chengdu Plain, all Western Zhou swords were found in mortuary contexts, presenting us with evidence of direct associations between an individual and the object. Meanwhile, we shall consciously keep in mind that although burial goods represent the end of the life of objects, they encapsulate the lifelong social relations the object engaged in and the perceptions the living had toward the occupant. The following discussion will investigate the use of the sword in various locations in the Western Zhou period and discuss how and why multiple-layered symbolic meaning for the sword was acquired through human agency and across space.

THE LIFE HISTORY OF THE SWORD IN THE YU STATE

Archaeological findings indicate a geographic shift of the distribution of swords during the early Western Zhou period around late eleventh century BCE. The swords were seldom seen in the Sichuan Basin but were concentrated in the Yu state at Baoji, western Shaanxi. We do not know for sure whether this shift reflects a real change or just a temporary phenomenon due to inadequate archaeological recovery. It is possible that a native “branch” of the sword type continued to live on in the Sichuan Basin during the Western Zhou. Indeed, at the Jinsha site, willow-leaf-shaped swords were discovered in tombs of the early Spring and Autumn period (770 to 476 BCE) (Jiang 2010). They are, however, several hundred years later than the late Shang examples found at Jinsha and Shierqiao sites, leaving a huge temporal gap between them. Future discoveries of the sword from the Western Zhou period in the region will fill the gap and allow us to examine a complete life journey of the sword in this region.

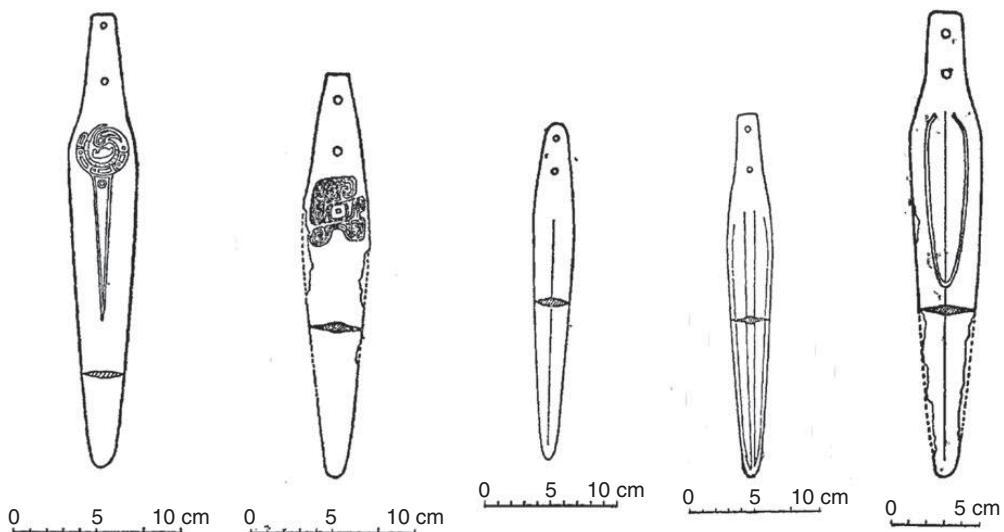
Nonetheless, the sword type branched out to the Yu state in the Baoji area in the early Western Zhou period around the eleventh century BCE. The Yu cemeteries have yielded thirteen swords, twelve of which were found in the early Western Zhou-date tombs (Lu and Hu 1988: 435). We do not have details on how the sword was introduced to the Baoji area, but material evidence unequivocally points to strong cultural connections between Baoji and the Chengdu Plain and Hanzhong where early swords were discovered. A group of bronzes and ceramics from the Yu cemeteries are remarkably similar in style to late Shang-date counterparts in the Chengdu Plain and Hanzhong region. This leads some even to argue that the cultural similarity observed in archaeological

records in the three regions can be better explained by population movement from the Chengdu Plain to Hanzhong, and then to Baoji, than merely by cultural diffusion and transmission (Lu and Hu 1988: 459–62; Sun 2000: 25–40).

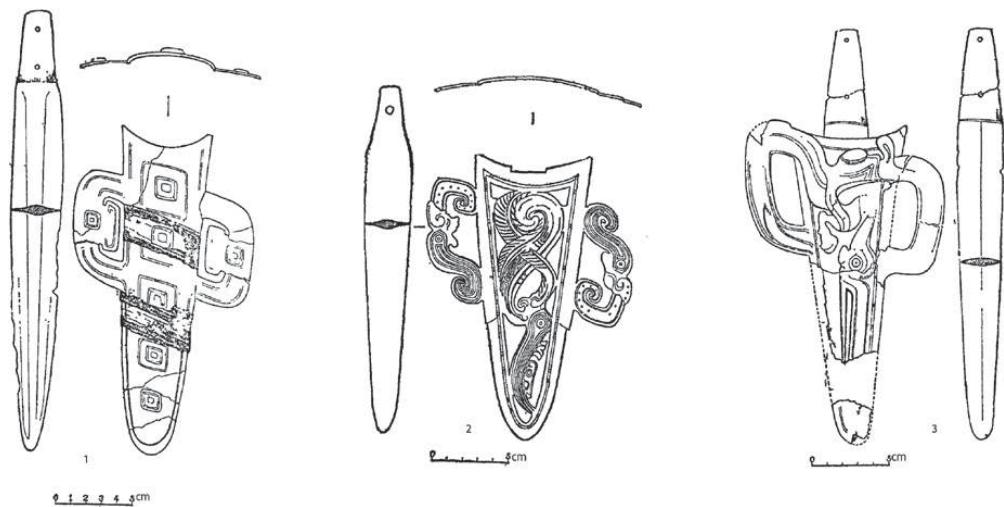
Thirteen out of twenty-eight willow-leaf-shaped swords of the Western Zhou period have been found in Yu tombs, eleven of which date to the early Western Zhou period (Figure 5.7). It makes the Yu state the place where the swords were used the earliest and in most numbers during the Western Zhou period. The Yu lineage must have developed their ways to interact with the swords, and the swords as a result accumulated more social meanings in the Yu state. In this section, I will examine the sword and its use in its mortuary context, aiming to compile a life history of the sword in the Yu state. The swords were commonly used in Yu cemeteries, consistently placed in tombs in a particular manner, and were exclusively in tombs of males. They were transformed from a minor regional weapon to an eternal extension of a person, as a gender signifier, and as a symbol of group identity.

An Extension of a Person beyond a Lifetime

The thirteen swords in the Yu cemeteries were recovered from twelve separate tombs: eleven at Zhuyuangou (竹园沟) and one at Rujiazhuang (茹家庄) (Lu and Hu 1988: 463–69). Tomb BRM1 at Rujiazhuang, dated to the Middle Western Zhou period, contains two swords. Eleven tombs at Zhuyuangou, dated to the early Western Zhou, each contain one sword. Though similar in shape, each sword is different in a number of ways. Their length varies, ranging from 23.5 cm (e.g., the sword BZM8:13 from Zhuyuangou tomb 8) to 36 cm long (e.g., the sword BRM1乙: 69 from Rujiazhuang tomb 1) (Figure 5.3). Each displayed different degrees of wear: some were worn slightly while others were heavily used. More flavors of personalization of the sword have been added through decoration on the sword and different designs of sheath ornaments. Two swords, BZM4:55 and BZM20:35, were decorated with patterns: BZM4:55 with an animal head composed of cloud and thunder motifs, and BZM20:35 with a crouching bird. None of the sheaths has survived, but three bronze sheath ornaments from BZM19:59, BZM14:22, and BRM1乙: 68 have been discovered (Figure 5.4). The sheath ornaments all have a triangular base with a rectangular loop handle attached to each side. However, the subject and execution of the design is different. The one from BZM14 features geometric patterns of square spirals laid vertically across the surface of the sheath. A square spiral is also repeated on each handle. Another one from BZM19, however, prefers openwork designs with intertwined serpents of bird heads. The same design is matched on the handle. The design on the ornament from BRM1 is hard to identify but differs from that of the other two.



5.3. Willow-leaf-shaped swords from Yu tombs. (Based on Lu and Hu 1988. From left to right, BZM20:35, p. 193, fig. 143.9; BZM4:55, p. 162, fig. 125.3; BZ7:147, p. 115, fig. 92.1; BZM18:38, p. 223, fig. 162.7; BZM13:99, p. 74, fig. 61.10.)



5.4. Willow-leaf-shaped swords with sheaths from Yu tombs. (Based on Lu and Hu 1988. From left to right, 1. BZM14, p. 213, fig. 154.1; 2. BZM19; p. 203, fig. 148.1; 3. BRM1乙:68, p. 313, fig. 219.)

Each sword was a singular object made individually for different individuals. Its bonding with the owner can be readily observed in Yu tombs. The Yu elite burials were rich in offerings, including bronze vessels, weapons, horse and chariot fittings, jades, and pottery, with diverse types and forms. Those burial goods were placed in various locations in tombs: next to the body in the coffin, between the inner and outer coffins, on top of the outer coffin,

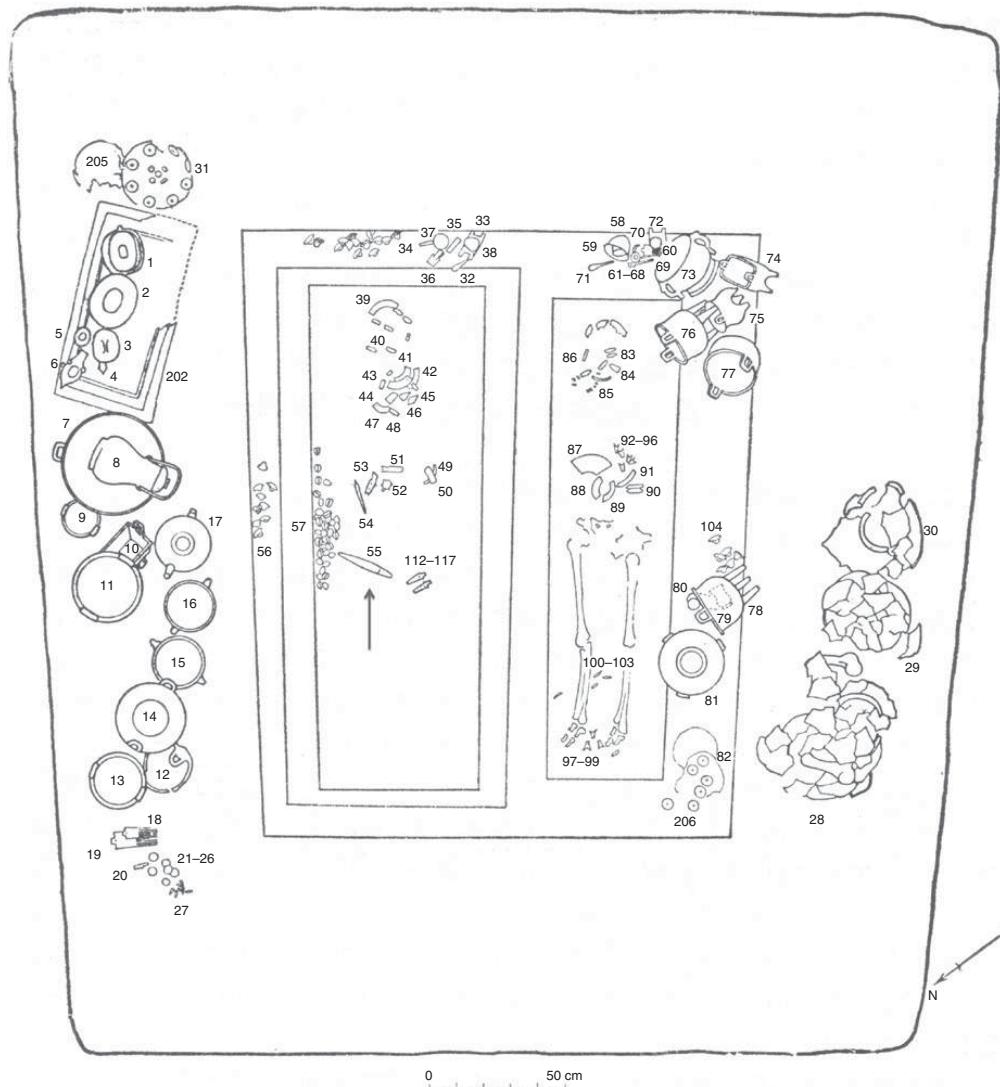
Bronze sword	Relative dating of the tomb	Sex of the deceased	Length of the sword (cm)	Placement in tomb
BZM8:13	King Cheng Kang period	M?	23.5	right side of the waist
BZM11:11	King Cheng Kang period	M?	28.1	right side of the waist
BZM18:38	King Cheng Kang period	M?	25.4	right side of the waist
BZM19:59	King Cheng Kang period	M?	22.8	right side of the waist
BZM20:35	King Cheng Kang period	M?	27.8	right side of the waist
BZM21:24	King Cheng Kang period	M?	25.4	right side of the waist
BZM1:258	King Kang	unknown	23.6	unknown
BZM13:99	early phase of King Kang	M	26.8	right side of the waist
BZM7:147	late phase of King Kang to early phase of King Zhao	M	28.4	right side of the waist
BZM14:22	early Western Zhou	M?	29	left side of the waist
BZM4:55	late phase of King Zhao	M	25.5	right side of the waist
BRM1乙:68	late phase of King Mu	M	26.8	left side of the waist
BRM1乙:69			30	left side of the waist

5.5. Placement of willow-leaf-shaped swords in Yu tombs at Zhuyuangou and Rujiazhuang (created by author).

on secondary ledges, or along the wall of the burial pit. In general, objects were grouped together according to their functions, but the placement of the objects including those of the same type varies across the tombs.

The placement of the sword in tombs, however, is quite uniform (Figure 5.5). Except for the one in Zhuyuangou tomb BZM1 whose placement is unknown, every sword in the other eleven tombs was placed exclusively inside the inner coffin, next to the body at the right or left side of the waist of the deceased (e.g., Figure 5.6). It projects an image of the sword being worn at the waist, which probably came from a custom among the Yu lineage members in life. Wearing short bronze swords or daggers at the waist was a practice particular to non-Shang and Zhou groups active in the northern frontier during the late second millennium BCE (So and Bunker 1995: 41–51). Bronze swords were thought to be unsuitable for the nature of the warfare in the Central Plain where soldiers fought mainly with long-handled bronze *ge* dagger axes (Yang 2005: 162–3). It is only in the following Spring and Autumn period that the tradition of carrying a sword was adopted by Chinese noblemen and the sword was viewed as a symbol of social rank and privileged status with social and cultural significance (e.g., Wang 1993: 48–59).

A famous anecdote in a passage of the Wu Taibo lineage (吳太伯世家) in Sima Qian's *Shiji* recorded that Jizha (季札), the son of the King Wu (吳王), hung his sword on a pine tree at the burial mound of Gentleman Xu (徐) to express his affection and friendship to the deceased who had admired his sword so much, but hesitated to ask for it when they met during Jizha's official trip to the state of Lu (魯國). Jizha could not present the sword to him at the time since the sword was an emblem of his role as an ambassador of the Wu state.



5.6. Placement of willow-leaf-shaped sword in tomb BZM4 (created by author based on Lu and Hu 1988: 143, fig. 110).

Without the sword, his authority to represent the state would have been seriously undermined. The tale later became a trope that indicated the virtue and integrity of a gentleman and gentlemanly friendship (Sima Qian 1959: 1459).

Though this complexity of the role of the sword was yet to be developed in the early Western Zhou, its close attachment and intimate relation with the owner at the Yu state cannot be underestimated. The variation in the length of the sword could indicate that they were tailored to suit the height of their owner. The taste of the owner can also be distinguished by ornamentation on the sword and sheath. The special bond between the object and the individual

was maintained in the afterlife, as suggested by the placement of the sword in tombs, and therefore transcended life and death. For both the dead and the living, the sword was no longer a personal weapon, but could have been transformed into a permanent extension of a person, as a metaphor of personal identity.

A Symbol of the Cultural Identity of the Yu Lineage

Neither the Yu lineage nor its polity was mentioned in transmitted texts. Inscriptions on a number of bronze vessels from the Yu cemetery indicate that the lineage was self-named “Yu” (弓魚). Material evidence from three locations in its cemetery has led scholars to argue that the Yu were a lineage different from the Shang and Zhou. Lu and Hu (1988: 446–62), for example, suggest that the Yu were likely descendants of Qiang or Di people active in northwestern and southwestern China respectively who likely migrated to Baoji in the late Shang period around the eleventh century BCE. Given Yu’s unique proposed cultural and ethnic background, it is not surprising to see items in their tombs exhibiting distinctive local characteristics in addition to typical Shang and Zhou bronze vessels. Those objects, while common in the Yu state, were rare or absent in other Zhou-held regions (Sun 2011).

Among them are two types of bronze weapons, the willow-leaf-shaped sword and triangular-blade *ge* dagger axe, as well as a set of four miniature bronzes, a flat bottom *guan* (罐) jar, a pointed bottom *guan* jar, a shallow *pan* (盘) basin, and a ladle-shaped object with a curved handle. The majority of the Yu tombs contain these objects. The triangular-blade *ge*, including ones in full size or ones cast smaller and cruder specifically for funerary purposes, dominate the weaponry in the Yu cemetery burials. Both the swords and the triangular-blade *ge*, and especially those made just for funerary versions, were often buried near the waist of the deceased. The four miniature bronzes as a set were often buried together within the outer coffin or the inner coffin near the head of the deceased. Some burials contain all four objects while others contain one, two, or three of them. The function of these objects is unknown. They were often placed together with bronze hair pins and comb-like artifacts, however, implying that they could have been part of a toiletry kit used in life but made in miniature to serve as funerary objects for tombs.

These objects were not symbols of political status or rank since their location near the body of the deceased suggests that they were personal belongings and not emblems of state, as were bronze vessels of Shang and Zhou styles that also appeared in Yu tombs, but not next to the body. For instance, the scale and range of bronze vessels in each tomb suggest the use of them as indicators of the sociopolitical hierarchy in the Zhou cultural system.

The most prestigious were the displays accompanying the lord of the Yu and high-elite members whose tombs often contained at least a dozen finely cast bronze vessels, including various *ding* and *gui* sets. The lower elites were accompanied by only a couple of vessels each, and at the bottom rank were those with none. Bronze vessels were used commonly to reflect the ritual and social rank of Zhou elites in tombs and this practice was clearly adopted by the Yu to a great extent. At the same time, though, the Yu buried their local items, including two types of weapons and a set of miniature bronzes. The placement of these items in burial signified their use in daily, local social activities in the Yu society. The materialization of the Yu lineage cultural identity can also be observed through the use of local-style pottery, exemplified by small pointed and flat-bottomed *guan* jars and large jars with an elongated belly (Sun 2011). The uniform east-west orientation of the Yu tombs (between 9° and 15°) further speaks of Yu's conscious presentation of their distinctive cultural and lineage identity.

During the Middle Western Zhou period, changes in cultural customs and mortuary practice occurred in the Yu. This is evidenced in the elimination of the four miniature bronzes. None of the four Middle Western Zhou tombs at Ruijiazhuang contains these objects. However, the sword and the *ge* dagger axe continue to be seen in Yu tombs (for example, BRM1 and BRM2, tombs of the lord of Yu and his wife), serving as a material reminder of Yu's unique cultural background and martial authority.

A Gender Signifier

The preservation of human skeletal remains in Yu tombs is poor, making it difficult to identify the sex of the deceased based on analysis of the bone. Four of the twenty-seven tombs in Yu cemeteries, BZM4, BZM7, BZM13, and BRM1, are double burials with two chambers within each burial pit. Inscriptions on bronze vessels in those tombs reveal that individuals buried in the main chamber were either Yubo (弓魚伯) (the lord of the Yu; BZM7, BZM13, and BRM1) or Yuji (弓魚季) (the youngest in the lineage; BZM4); while the side chamber held his concubine. Based on inscriptions on bronzes, the deceased in another tomb BRM2 was identified as Jingji (井姬), the wife of the lord of Yu who himself was buried in tomb BRM1.

The assemblage of burial goods associated with each of these nine individuals, four males and five females, shows a distinctive pattern. All individuals were buried with bronze vessels, suggesting their relatively high status in burial practice, but only the four males were interred with bronze weapons, primarily willow-leaf-shaped swords and triangular-blade *ge* dagger axes, and none of the five female graves contained weapons. The sex of the deceased in the other twenty-two tombs is unknown, but if the weapon distribution we observed

from the above nine individuals can be projected onto other tombs in the Yu cemeteries, we can argue that the other eight tombs with willow-leaf-shaped swords were most likely those of males.

Evidence that could strengthen the above argument can be found in the distribution of the set of four miniature bronzes mentioned above: the flat bottom *guan* (jar), the pointed bottom *guan* (jar), the shallow *pan* (basin), and the ladle-shaped object with a curved handle. These bronzes, as well as the sword and triangular-blade *ge*, are unique to the Yu lineage. However, the set of the four objects was used in both male and female tombs. In the three early Western Zhou-date tombs BZM4, BZM7, and BZM13, the master and his concubine were both buried with these miniature bronzes. Clearly these objects were gender-neutral in a mortuary context, while bronze weapons were not.

The reason that the four objects were gender-neutral probably lies in their function. These objects could be used as toiletry sets for personal beautification, a daily activity for both male and female members of the Yu lineage. Lu and Hu (1988: 448–9) studied bronze figurines from the tombs, suggesting that male and female shared similar hairstyles and dress patterns. If so, it would not be surprising that they used the same set of tools for beautification. By contrast, the use of weapons in wars or other ceremonial occasions was mostly reserved for males in the Yu society.

WILLOW-LEAF-SHAPED SWORDS BEYOND THE YU LINEAGE FROM CA. MID-ELEVENTH CENTURY TO CA. MID-TENTH CENTURY BCE

In addition to those recovered in the Yu lineage cemeteries, twenty swords of the same type have been unearthed from fifteen burials and one horse and chariot pit at eight Western Zhou-date sites (Figure 5.7): four from Baicaopo (白草坡) tombs M1 and M2 in Lingtai (灵台), Gansu (甘肃) (GBG 1977); four from three tombs M215, M203, and M125 at Beiyao (北窑) in Luoyang (洛阳), Henan (河南) (LWG 1999a: 26–30, 115–18, 165, 167); three from M152, M183, M210 at Zhangjiapo (张家坡) in Chang'an (长安) County, Shaanxi (陕西) (ZSKKY 1999: 68–70, 179); two from M52 and M253 at Liulihe (琉璃河) (the Yan state cemetery) in Beijing (BWY 1995: 23–8, 36–8, 200–2); two from tombs at Hejiacun (贺家村), M5 and unknown tomb in Qishan (岐山) County, Shaanxi (SBG SWGW 1976); two from tomb M1 at Yejiashan (叶家山), Suixian (随县), Hubei (湖北) (HWKY SB 2011); three from M6081, M6210, and M6071 at Tianma-Qucun (天马-曲村) (Zou 2000: 337, 376, 458), Shanxi; and one in a horse and chariot pit at the campus of Linye Xuexiao (林业学校) (School of Forestry) in Luoyang (LWG 1999b). The dating of the tombs and the horse and chariot pit primarily falls into the early Western Zhou period.

Swords	Relative dating of the tomb**	Identity of the deceased	Length (cm)	Main features of the tomb	Sex of the deceased	Location of the sword
Hejiacun M5	early Western Zhou		20 (broken)	one inner, one outer coffin	unknown	unknown
Hejiacun	early Western Zhou		unknown			
Baicaopo M1	King Cheng to King Kang	Heibo or Jingbo	unknown	not reported	M	unknown
Baicaopo M1 (not reported)	King Cheng to King Kang	Heibo or Jingbo	unknown	not reported	M	unknown
Baicaopo M2:35	King Cheng to King Kang	Yuanbo	24.3	one inner, one outer coffin	M	northern secondary ledge
Baicaopo M2:36			24.3			northern secondary ledge
Liulihe M52:28	King Cheng to King Kang	Fu	25	one inner, two outer coffin	M	northern secondary ledge
Liulihe M253:47	early Western Zhou	Yu	15 (broken)	two outer coffin	M	eastern secondary ledge
Beiyao M215: 54*	King Kang to King Zhao		24.5	large tomb of inverted trepozoid profile	M	eastern edge of the outer coffin
Beiyao M215:55			21.2			unknown (tomb looted)
Beiyao M 203*	early Western Zhou		unknown			
Beiyao M125*	early Western Zhou		unknown			
Horse and chariot pit, School of Forestry, Luoyang	early Western Zhou					
Zhangjiapo M152	King Gong, Yih and Xiao	Jingshu		pit grave with a ramp	M	unknown
Zhangjiapo M183:6	King Zhao to King Mu	Mengyuan	21.2	catacomb tomb	M	unknown
Zhangjiapo M210	unknown		unknown	one inner, one outer coffin		unknown
Qucun M6210:49	King Zhao		21.45	one inner, one outer coffin	M	east between the inner and outer coffin
Qucun M6071:11	King Zhao to King Mu		28.7	one inner, one outer coffin	M	northeast of the outer coffin

** For absolute dating, please refer to Li (2011: xvii).

5.7. Distribution of willow-leaf-shaped swords at Western Zhou period sites. * indicates partially looted. (Created by author.)

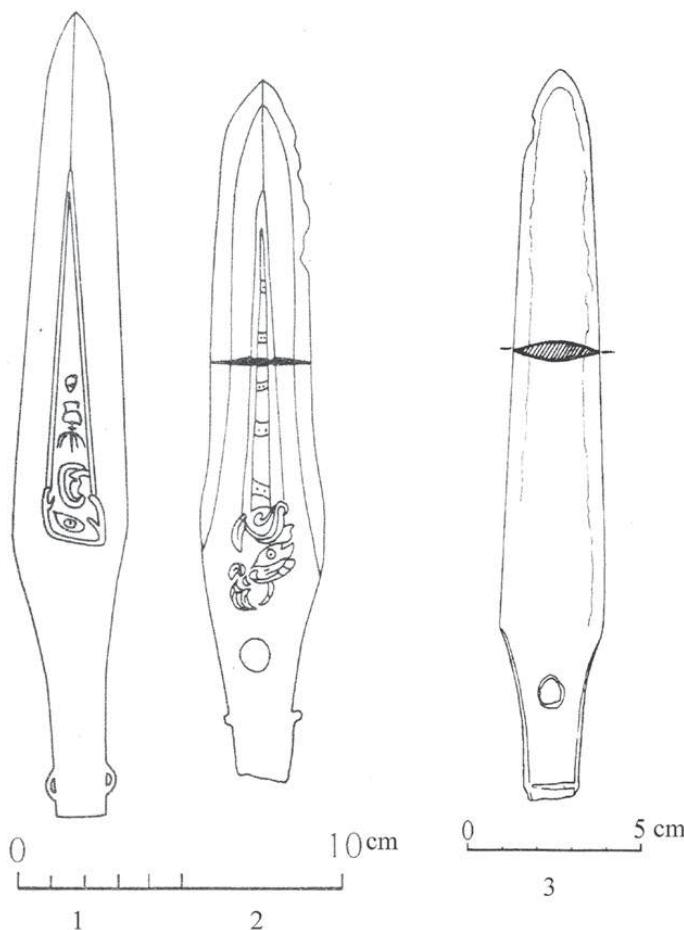
There is a wide geographic distribution of the sites, including the Zhou metropolitan area including Hejiacun, Zhangjiapo, and Beiyao, and frontier regions of the Zhou at Baicaopo in the northwest, at Yejiashan in the Han River Valley in the south, at Qucun in southern Shanxi, and at Liulihe in the northeast (Figure 5.1). The following discussion will introduce the swords sporadically discovered at sites beyond the Yu at Baoji and hypothesize the possible mechanism of transmission based on available evidence at each site.

Swords from the Zhou Metropolitan Area: Hejiacun, Zhangjiapo, Beiyao, and Linye Xuexiao

After examining inscriptions on bronzes in the Yu state cemetery, Lu and Hu (1988: 416–23) have suggested that the Yu actively engaged with various lineages in the Zhou elite network. Interactions with neighboring lineages in the periphery of the Zhou metropolitan area including the Jing (井), Ze (矢), Ling (凌), and Feng (丰) were well documented in inscriptions on bronzes from the Yu cemetery. Social and political interactions between the Yu and those lineages could be the underlying mechanism for the transmission of the sword to Beiyao and Zhangjiapo sites.

Four swords were found in three early Western Zhou tombs in the Beiyao cemetery, M125, M203, and M215, with two in M215 and one in each of the other two. One sword, M215:54, is 24.5 cm long and is decorated with a *kui* (夔) dragon motif along the central ridge of its blade (Figure 5.8.1). Two characters *fengbo* (丰伯), or lord of Feng, were inscribed on the blade. The other sword, M215:55, is 21.2 cm long and is decorated with a *taotie* (饕餮) animal motif along the central ridge of it blade (Figure 5.8.2). The remaining two swords, in M125 and M203, were broken and not given detailed description in the archaeological report. Presumably they are willow-leaf-shaped swords since they were placed together with two swords in burial M215 in the archaeologist report.

Tomb M215 is dated to the period between the reign of King Kang (康) and Zhao (昭), roughly from the end of the eleventh to the mid-tenth century BCE. Coincidentally, a contemporary tomb BZM7 in the Yu state cemetery contains a *ding* vessel with an inscription recording “Fenggong” (丰公), or the Lord of Feng, X (unreadable graph) cast this precious vessel “丰公X 作宝尊彝。” This inscription tells us that there was contact between the elite of the Yu and Feng lineage during the early Western Zhou period. The lord of Feng who owned the sword and the lord who owned the *ding* cauldron belonged to the same lineage and must have been kin. Thus, it is likely that the sword in tomb 215 at Beiyao owned by Fengbo was inspired by the sword in the Yu state, or perhaps was imported from the Yu and later inscribed by Fengbo. Future metallurgical studies of the swords could help answer this question.



5.8. Willow-leaf-shaped swords from Beiyao and Zhangjiapo (1. Beiyao M215:54 based on LWG 1999a, fig. 67.3; 2. Beiyao M215:55 based on LWG 1999a, fig. 67.5; 3. M183:6 at Zhangjiapo based on ZSKKY 1999, p. 179, fig. 134.8).

A pit containing four horses and one chariot of the early Western Zhou period was discovered at the campus of the School of Forestry at Luoyang. Though looted, the pit still yielded fifty-two bronzes, including vessels, music instruments, and weapons of various types. A willow-leaf-shaped sword and a sheath ornament were found in the chariot. The sword is 22.8 cm long and was decorated with a *kui*-dragon head. The burial with which the pit was associated has not been discovered, and the layout and scale of the cemetery is unknown as well. How the sword was introduced to the site is unclear, but it is very close to Beiyao so that contact between them is certainly imaginable.

Three swords were buried in three tombs, M152, M183, and M210, in the Zhangjiapo cemetery. Tomb M183 is dated between King Zhao and King Mu's reign (tenth century BCE); and M152 to late Middle Western Zhou (late tenth century to early ninth century BCE). Tomb M210 cannot be dated. The sword

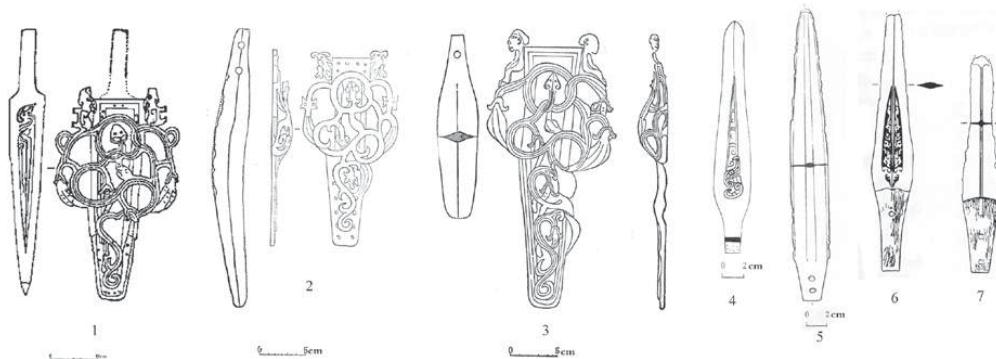
in tomb M183 is 21.2 cm long and plain, and has a perforation on the grip ([Figure 5.8.3](#)). The swords in tombs M152 and M210 were broken and not reported in detail. Their size and shape are unknown, but the archaeological report claims that the swords were placed together with the one in tomb M183. Presumably they were willow-leaf-shaped swords as well.

Zhangjiapo is the cemetery of a minor branch of the Jing (井) lineage, a group with whom the Yu might have intermarried in the Middle Western Zhou period. Two large tombs at Ruijiazhuang (茹家庄), BRM1 and BRM2, provided material evidence of the marriage between the two lineages. Inscriptions on bronze vessels in tomb BRM1 at Ruijiazhuang revealed that most of the vessels were commissioned by a lord of Yu. The deceased in this tomb is identified as Yubo. Inscriptions on bronze vessels in tomb BRM2 recorded that Yubo cast vessels for his wife Jingji (井姬), a member of the Jing lineage. The deceased in BRM2 was therefore identified as Jingji, the wife of Yubo. Her tomb was dated to the Middle Western Zhou, or contemporary with tomb M183 at Zhangjiapo. The marital arrangement between the two lineages could have provided the context in which the sword was spread from the Yu to the Jing lineage. Indeed, it is possible that the sword in tomb M183 was a gift from the Yu to Jingshu (井叔), the head of a minor branch of Jing lineage.

The archaeological context of the two swords at Hejiacun is unclear. The report on the site stated that two swords (called daggers in the report), about 20 cm long and with a perforation on the grip, were found, but it did not indicate from which burial they came. The caption on Fig. 9 in the report shows that one sword came from tomb 5, but the drawing and description of tomb 5 does not show a sword. The tomb was dated to the early Western Zhou period. Given the lack of archaeological information, we are unable to further the discussion on the swords at Hejiacun. Another tomb at the same site contained bronze vessels similar to those from Hanzhong, suggesting cultural contact between Hanzhong and Hejiacun ([Li 2011: 92–118](#)). Given that Hanzhong and the Yu state had a close cultural or even lineage tie, some sort of interaction between the Yu state and Hejiacun could have occurred.

Swords from Zhou Regional States and the Northwestern Frontier: Baicaopo, Liulihe, Tianma-Qucun, and Yeqiashan

Four swords and two sheath ornaments were found in two early Western Zhou tombs, M1 and M2 at Baicaopo (白草坡) ([GBG 1977](#)). The swords are similar in size and style: about 24.3 cm long, having a flat grip and a blade with a central ridge decorated with *kui* dragons and slanted square spirals. The sheath ornaments have an openwork design of intertwined serpents and vines seated on a triangular base ([Figure 5.9.1](#)). Two rhinoceroses were depicted at the top corners of the sheath.



5.9. Willow-leaf-shaped swords from various Western Zhou sites (1. Baicaopo based on GBG 1977.2, p. 115, fig. 13.1; 2, 3. Liulihe based on BWY 1995, p. 201, fig. 117; p. 202, fig. 118; 4, 5 Tianma-Qucun based on Zou 2000, p. 376, fig. 544.2; p. 458, fig. 63).

Two early Western Zhou tombs, M₅₂ and M₂₅₃, in the Yan state cemetery at Liulihe each yielded a sword and a sheath ornament. The sword in tomb M₅₂ is 25 cm long and has two perforations on its handle. The sheath ornament has a triangular base over which lay elegant openwork composed of interlacing vines that terminate in a bud-like floral formation with serpents tangled in the center and at the side (Figure 5.9.2). Two standing birds with hooked beaks, plumes, and powerful claws are depicted on the corners of the sheath. The sword in tomb M₂₅₃ has a perforation on the grip and a central ridge on the blade. The sheath ornament is similar to the one in tomb M₅₂, except that there are two seated human figures on the top corners (Figure 5.9.3).

Bronze objects at Baicaopo and Liulihe displayed striking stylistic similarities to those found at the Yu lineage cemetery (Sun 2006). Two types of objects, bronze weapons with tiger motifs and cylindrical *you* (卣) wine vessels, were popular at Baicaopo and the Yu lineage cemetery at Baoji, but were rarely seen at other Western Zhou sites. Additionally, the *taotie* face with dramatic buffalo horns protruding out into space and the sculptural buffalo head design appears only on bronze vessels found at Liulihe and the Yu state in north China in the late eleventh and early tenth century BCE. The famous *Boju li* (伯矩鬲) from tomb M₂₅₁ at Liulihe and the *Boge zun* (伯各尊), *Boge you* (伯各卣), and *Yubo gui* (伯各簋) from the Yu lineage cemetery are all decorated with animal faces and water buffalo horns (Sun 2006: 215–37). A metallurgical study of the *Boge zun*, *Boge you*, and *Yubo gui* suggests that sculptural horns were cast using separately made molds inserted into the mold of the square base. It is reasonable to assume that the same technique was used to cast the *Boju li* from Liulihe (Su et. al. 1988). It could be that these vessels found at Liulihe and Baoji were cast at the same workshop or by artisans at different workshops who were familiar with the same casting technique.

Furthermore, bronze sheath ornaments were found only at the Yu lineage cemetery, Baicaopo and Liulihe. All seven sheath ornaments from these three sites have a triangular base. The two found at Liulihe are stylistically identical to the ones from tomb M2 at Baicaopo. All have an openwork design of intertwined serpents and vines seated on the triangular base. The only difference is that on the top corners of the two sheaths from Liulihe are two standing birds and alternately seated human figures, but on the top corners of those at Baicaopo are two rhinoceroses. Decorations on three sheath ornaments from the Yu lineage cemetery are less elaborated. The handles are in the shape of a slanted rectangle or a serpent with a bird head attached to each side of a base decorated with square spirals or intertwined serpents with bird heads.

The Yu and Baicaopo are geographically close to each other. Their geographical proximity could have facilitated the flow of the sword into Baicaopo. The Yan capital at Liulihe was a vast distance from the Baoji area and Zhou metropolitan center in the Wei River Valley, yet their displayed material culture as discussed above was unusually similar to that at Baoji. Current evidence is not sufficient to determine the specific mechanism that prompted the movement of the sword to the Yan. Yet, the stylistic resemblance of the artifacts and shared cultural characteristics between the Yu and the Yan and Baicaopo imply frequent exchanges between the Yan and the Wei River Valley in the early Western Zhou. Such exchanges were documented in inscriptions on a few bronzes from Liulihe. Burial M253, for instance, from which a sword was found, yielded a *ding* (M253:12) that recorded that Yan Hou sent Jin (堇) of the Jiuguan (纠貫) lineage to Zongzhou to pay his respects to the Grand Protector, the titular founder of the Yan (BWY 1995: 101).

Another possibility to explain the similarity could be the relocation of population from the Wei River Valley who were familiar with the willow-leaf-shaped sword and even had access to it. Inscriptions on the two important vessels of the Yan, Ke *he* (克盃), and Ke *lei* (克罍) from a looted tomb M1193 document six lineages including Qiang (羌), Ma (馬), Zha (臤), Yu (雩), Yu (馭), and Wei (微) that were bestowed to Yanhou Ke for the founding of the regional state (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan Kaogu yanjiusuo and Beijing shi wenwu yanjiusuo 1990). This important historical documentation reveals that the Yan at Liulihe consisted of various lineage groups. The Qiang and Wei are thought to have been originally situated in the triangular intersection between the Wei and Jing River valleys and they were considered as close allies of the Zhou (Chen 1997: 252–68). A branch of each lineage was allocated to the Yan to support the ruling lineage led by Shaogong's (召公) descendants.

The Jin was installed by the Zhou court on its northern fringe in southern Shanxi. Three swords, one in each tomb, were reported in male tombs in zone J4 of the Jin cemetery at Tianma–Qucun. One sword is from M6081, the largest

early Western Zhou tomb in the cemetery. No illustration or description of the sword is published. The line drawing of the tomb nonetheless shows that a willow-leaf-shaped sword was placed on top of the outer coffin. The second sword is from burial M6210 (M6210:49), dated to King Zhao's reign in the early tenth century BCE. It measures 21.45 cm long and the center of its blade is covered with a *kui* dragon with a relief head and an elongated triangular body (Figure 5.9.4). The third sword (M6071:17) is from a slightly later burial, M6071, of the tenth century BCE. It is 28 cm long and features a raised central spine running toward the tip of the blade. The curved up blade of the sword indicates that as part of the burial ritual the sword was intentionally bent like other bronze weapons in the tomb (Figure 5.9.5).

The most recent discovery of willow-leaf-shaped swords came from a male tomb, M1, at the Yejiashan (叶家山) cemetery of a regional state called Zeng (曾) in Suizhou (随州) in the middle Han River Valley (HWKY SBWG 2011). The tomb, dated to King Cheng and King Kang's reigns (late eleventh to early tenth century BCE), contained two swords (Figures 5.9.6; 5.9.7). One, 22.1 cm long, is decorated with two rows of relief *kui* dragons, three in each of the two registers, within a leaf-shaped pattern on each side of the blade. The other sword, 18 cm long and plain, features a slightly bulging spine on the blade. The black residue on the tang suggests wooden hilts were originally attached to the sword.

How the sword was introduced to the Jin and Zeng remains unclear. Inscriptions on bronze vessels, however, provide hints of possible indirect contacts between Yu, Jin, and Zeng through the Nangong (南宫) lineage whose members often held prominent positions at the Zhou court. The Jin tomb M6081 contained a pair of round, undecorated *ding* (M6081:88/M6081:89) whose inscriptions indicate both were specially made by a noblewoman of the Nangong lineage. Coincidentally, the Jingji's tomb (late tenth century BCE) of the Yu lineage at Rujiazhuang includes a pair of *gui* commissioned by a noble from the Nangong lineage as well.

Inscriptions on four of the famous "Anzhou six vessels" (安中六器), a pair of square *ding*, a *zhi*, and a *yan*, all cast by a patron named Zhong (中), portrayed members of the Nangong lineage who played an active role on behalf of the Zhou court in dealing with local groups in the middle Han River Valley during the early Western Zhou. Inscriptions on both *ding* (JC: 2751–2), dated to the early tenth century BCE (Shen 2013), indirectly indicate that Zhou King gave the charge to Nangong to put down the rebel Hu (虎) lineage. An inscription on the Zhong *zhi* (觯) records that Zhou King awarded Zhong four horses at a ceremony and Nangong was the one who carried out King's award (JC: 6541). These two inscriptions indicate Nangong's connection with the royal affairs in the south. Most importantly, an inscription on a square *gui* (M111:67) in burial M111 at Yejiashan shows a noble Kang (possibly the

generation of the lord of Zeng) cast a sacrificial vessel for his glorious deceased father Nangong (Huang and Hu 2014). If Nangong was the ruling lineage of the Zeng, as Huang Fengchun and Hu Gang (Huang and Hu 2014), the two chief excavators of Yejiashan cemetery, proposed, this would establish a direct link between Zeng and Yu where a pair of Nangong *gui* were found in the tomb of Jingji. Whether or not the Zeng was founded by the Nangong lineage is a question that merits further discussion. Nevertheless, interactions between Nangong and Yu and Jin could have facilitated the spread of the willow-leaf-shaped sword to Jin and Zeng.

REINTERPRETATION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SWORDS

Objects are understood to accumulate biographies as they move between people (Gosden and Marshall 1999). As objects live in new cultural contexts, they can be transformed and acquire new connotations for the object in its new social and cultural context. The use of the sword in burials in the communities reported above have amply documented such shifts.

Valued for Its Rarity

In contrast to its popular use in the Yu (50 percent of tombs in Zhuyuangou contain a sword), the sword is a rarity at other locations. In the following relatively well preserved cemeteries, Beiyao, Zhangjiapo, and Liulihe, Tianma-Qucun, and Yejiashan, only a small fraction of tombs contain swords: two of sixty-one reported Western Zhou tombs (3 percent) at Liulihe, three of the 348 tombs (less than 1 percent) at Beiyao, three of the 221 tombs (1.4 percent) at Zhangjiapo, three of 641 tombs at Tianma-Qucun (0.4 percent). At Yejiashan, only five tombs out of the 140 burials have been partially reported at the cemetery. Two swords are reported from one burial M1. The overall percentage of tombs containing swords is unclear, but it is likely very low based on the pattern observed from other Western Zhou period burials. The sword had been transformed into an exotic object outside the Yu lineage.

An Object Primarily Used by High-Ranking Male Elites of Different Cultural Backgrounds

At a first glance, the use of the sword in these communities is fairly similar to that in the Yu lineage: it was used in male elite tombs only. On a closer look, however, there are two subtle differences. First, in the Yu, the sword was buried with elites from a wide range of status, from Yubo, the head of the Yu, to low-ranking elites. However, at Zhangjiapo, Beiyao, Baicaopo, Liulihe, Yejiashan, and Tianma-Qucun, the sword was primarily used by those near or at the top

of political hierarchies: head of a lineage or a polity, or high-ranking officials of Zhou regional states.

Tombs M183 and M152 at Zhangjiapo could be of high-ranking elites, although the status of the deceased in tomb M210 cannot be precisely determined. Tomb M183, 3.2 meters long and 1.8 meters wide, is the richest among the catacomb tombs in the cemetery. It contains over ninety items of burial goods, including bronze vessels (*ding*, *gui*, *yan*), weapons, horse and chariot ornaments, lacquer items, jade artifacts, and pottery. Inscriptions on bronze vessels from the tomb suggest the deceased was a noble named Mengyuan (孟员). Tomb M152 is one of the few tombs with a ramp attached to the main tomb pit. The use of one or more ramps indicates a burial structure reserved for the local lord or high-ranking nobles during the Western Zhou. Despite being repeatedly looted, the tomb has yielded two bronze *ding*, a number of bronze weapons, lacquer ware, and horse and chariot ornaments. The inscription on surviving bronze vessels indicate the deceased was Jingshu (井叔), a head of the Jing lineage.

Tomb M215 at Beiyao could belong to a high-ranking elite member. The status of the deceased in tombs M125 and M203 cannot be determined. All three tombs have been severely looted. The original scale of the burial goods, particularly the quantity and type of bronze vessels, is unknown. Tomb M215 is one of the largest tombs in the cemetery. It is a large rectangular earth pit slightly narrowing from the top to bottom of the chamber. The top is 6.55 meters long and 4.7 meters wide, while the bottom is 6.05 meters long and 4.35 meters wide. Despite having been severely looted, it has yielded a considerable number of jade artifacts and horse and chariot ornaments. Tombs M125 and M203 are mid-size tombs, but both have been severely looted and only a few bronze weapons such as dagger axes and bronze horse and chariot fittings have been recovered.

Tombs M1 and M2 at Baicaopo are of the head of the Jing (涇), previously identified as Hei (灤) and Yuan (厔) lineage respectively. Both tombs are rich in burial offerings. Tomb M1, 3.3 meters long and 2.5 meters wide, contains twenty-one bronze vessels, including seven *ding*, three *gui*, two *zun*, and one of each *yan*, *zhi*, *jue*, *jiao*, *jia*, and *he*. Other goods include bronze tools, horse and chariot ornaments, and jade artifacts. Tomb M2, 3.35 meters long and 2 meters wide, contains an inner and an outer coffin, and eleven bronze vessels (including *ding*, *gui*, and *you*, two of each; and *yan*, *zun*, *zhi*, *jue*, and *he*, one of each), various bronze weapons and tools, and jade artifacts.

Tombs M52 and M253 at Liulihe are of high-ranking elites of the Yan state. Tomb M52, 4.3 meters long and 2.2 meters wide, contains an inner coffin and two outer coffins, a human sacrifice, six bronze vessels, and various types of bronze tools and weapons. It has two associated horse and chariot pits to its south. Inscriptions on bronze vessels show the deceased was Fu (复). Tomb

M253, 5.1 meters long and 3.5 meters wide, is one of the richest tombs in the cemetery. It contains twenty-two bronze vessels, including six *ding*, two *gui*, four *li*, two *jue*, two *you*, and one of each *zhi*, *zun*, *yan*, *hu*, *pan*, and *he*. Inscriptions on the bronze vessels show the deceased was You (攸).

Tomb M6081, about 13 square meters in size, is the richest burial at Tianma-Quncun. The deceased, an elite of middle rank, was buried with an inner and an outer coffin with prominent burial goods in bronze including twelve vessels, three *ge* dagger axes, three tools, and a large number of chariot and horses fittings. Inscriptions on bronzes in the tomb reveal miscellaneous patrons. Some of the patrons used to be associated with the Shang; their vessels were likely trophies passed down to the tomb master after the Zhou conquest. The patron Bo (伯), an elder inscribed on a set of *zun* and *you* of the same style, could be the occupant of the tomb. Both vessels, with a squat body and a bulging belly with the widest portion toward the ring foot, can be dated to around the early tenth century BCE. Burial M6210, about 10.56 square meters, can be dated around the same time period. The occupant, a fifty-six-year-old male, was buried in an inner and an outer coffin and accompanied by ten bronze vessels including three *ding* and one each of *gui*, *yan*, *li*, *jue*, *zhi*, and *zun*. The occupant is a noble of middle rank in the Jin state. Burial M6071, about 4.48 square meters, contains a *ding* and a *gui*. It is dated around the tenth century BCE and later than M6081 and M6210. Its occupant is likely a low-ranking noble.

The occupant of burial M1 at Yejiashan was a high-ranking male elite member of the Zeng state. The burial was furnished with twenty-two food and wine vessels including eight *ding* (four square and four round *ding*), two *gui*, one *yan*, one *li*, three *jue*, one *jia*, two *gu*, one *zhi*, one *zun*, one *you*, and one square *ding*. Inscriptions on bronzes overwhelmingly indicate that the occupant was Shi (师). The richness of tomb M1 is comparable to that of tombs M65, M27, and M111 in the same cemetery and the occupants are identified as several generations of Zenghou, the head of the lineage and state. It is possible that the occupant of M1 was the head of the lineage before the Zhou court officially granted the title “Hou” (侯) to the lineage (Zhang 2013: 270–84).

The second difference between Yu and other communities in the use of the willow-leaf-shaped sword is that in Yu tombs the sword was evidently transformed into a gender indicator for individual males across different social spectrums within the Yu lineage, while in others the sword was not. Eleven of the twenty-two (50 percent) Yu tombs at Zhuyuangou contain a sword. At other sites, the sword continued to be used solely in male tombs, but only a small fraction of high-ranking male tombs contained the sword, making it unlikely that the sword was a material signifier of all males in those local communities. The deceased in seven tombs, two at Liulie, two at Baicaopo, two at Zhangjiapo, and one at Yejiashan, were identified as high-ranking male elites with the help

of inscriptions on bronze vessels from the tombs. None of the female tombs identified at these sites contains a sword. So it is likely that only high-ranking male elites at these communities were able to access the sword through various channels (marriage, cultural exchange, political interaction, etc.).

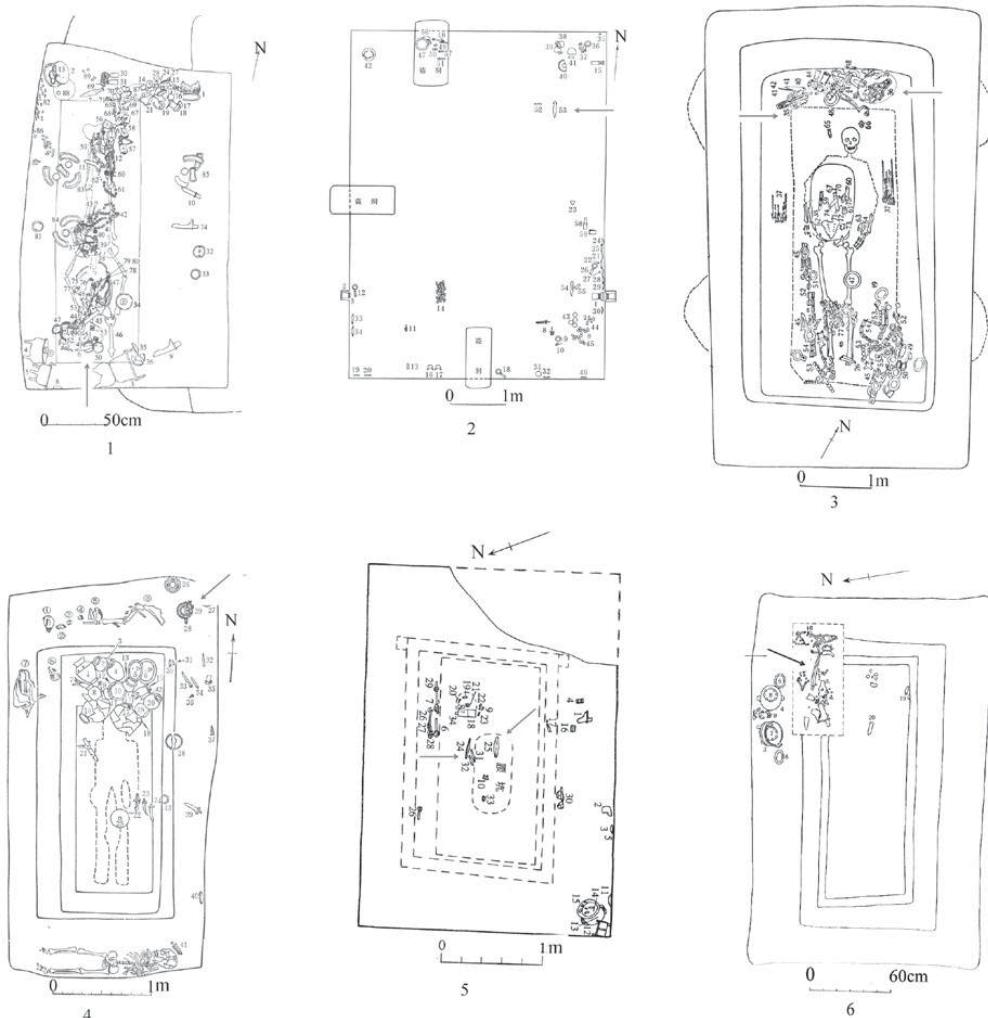
Reinterpretation of the Social Role of the Sword

There is a strong personal and cultural connection between the sword and individual users in the Yu lineage. Such bonding was largely discontinued in other communities. The intimacy between the sword and the deceased observed in the Yu was no longer visible elsewhere except at Yejiashan. The sword was not placed at the waist of the deceased at Beiyao, Zhangjiapo, Liulihe, Baicaopo, and Tianma-Qucun, where the location of the sword in the tomb can be readily observed. Instead, the sword was placed at various spots in tombs: outside the coffin, on the secondary ledge, between the inner and outer coffin, or near the tomb wall with other bronze weapons, chariot and horse fittings, or lacquer shields.

The placement of the swords in tomb M1 at Baicaopo is unclear since the tomb was partially damaged, but in tomb M2 the swords and sheaths were placed on the northern secondary ledge outside the coffin. The swords and sheath ornaments in tombs M52 and M253 at Liulihe were placed on the secondary ledge outside the outer coffin. Both swords in tomb M215 at Beiyao were placed on the eastern side of the outer coffin. At Zhangjiapo, the sword, with a few horse and chariot fittings, were placed at the top of the coffin in tomb M183, and in a compartment between the inner and outer coffin in tomb M152. The placement of the sword in tomb M210 has not been published. At Tianma-Qucun, the placement of the sword in three tombs is different. In burial M6081, the sword was placed on top of the outer coffin; in M6210, the east side of the inner and outer coffin; in M6071, the northeastern side of the outer coffin ([Figure 5.10](#)).

The spatial rearrangement of the sword is neither accidental nor trivial. Individuals in these communities must have established personal attachments to the sword. The sword was decorated, or physically modified, or even inscribed with individual names, and buried in tombs along with other valuables. It does reflect considerable investment in making the sword and the pride of ownership, but the connection did not translate into a special attachment of the sword to its owner. It did not receive the “special personal treatment” that the sword received in Yu tombs. In these communities, the sword was not absorbed and transformed into an ingredient of individual or group identity; it remained an exotic item and embodiment of a foreign or outside culture.

The use of the sword in tomb M1 at Yejiashan is the only case outside the Yu lineage where the intimacy between the sword and the deceased is observed.



5.10. Placement of willow-leaf-shaped swords (1. Zhangjiapo M183, based on ZSKKY 1999, p. 69, fig. 58; 2. Beiyao M215, based on LWG 1999a, p. 215, fig. 12.3. Baicaopo M2, based on GBG 1977, p. 103, fig. 5; 4. Liulihe M52, based on BWY 1995, p. 24, fig. 15; 5. Yejishan M1, based on HWKY SB 2011, p. 6, fig. 3; 6. Qucun M6071, based on Zou 2000, p. 456, fig. 629).

The tomb contains not one but two swords, which is not commonly seen at other sites. Like those in Yu tombs, both swords in M1 were placed near the waist of the deceased, projecting an intimate connection between the swords and the deceased. The swords were of practical use based on their size and quality. In other words, they were not made for a funerary purpose. It is likely that they were used by the deceased during his lifetime, probably in a similar fashion to that of Yu elites. Compared to other communities, the Zeng seem to have used the sword in a way that rediscovered or restored its original function and meaning as developed by the Yu lineage. What led the Zeng to

this act is a question that could be answered only when more data from the Yeqiashan cemetery are available in the future.

DISAPPEARANCE OF THE SWORD AFTER THE MIDDLE WESTERN ZHOU AROUND THE TENTH CENTURY BCE

The sword and the Yu lineage seem to have developed a symbiotic relationship where the sword became part of the life and an expression of cultural identity of the Yu lineage and where the Yu lineage provided an environment in which the sword survived and flourished. This interdependent relationship has been illustrated by the popular use of the sword by the Yu lineage and the spread of the sword primarily to groups in contact with them. Evidently the synchronous disappearance of the sword and the Yu lineage after the Middle Western Zhou period were interconnected. The Yu state disappeared archaeologically in the Baoji area and the willow-leaf-shaped sword vanished along with it after the Middle Western Zhou period. What happened to the Yu lineage and the willow-leaf-shaped sword remains unclear. It has been suggested that the Yu lineage, under the pressure from other lineages and having had frictions with the Zhou court, moved out of the Baoji area and migrated south to Sichuan during the late Western Zhou period (Lu and Hu 1988: 443–5; Zhang 2008b:151–65).

During the following Eastern Zhou period, the Bashu-style (巴蜀式) sword emerged in the Sichuan Basin and became a distinctive and dominant weapon type in the region. Was this a reincarnation of the earlier willow-leaf-shaped sword? A recent discovery of willow-leaf-shaped swords dating from the Spring and Autumn period at the Jinsha site has shortened the temporal gap between the willow-leaf-shaped sword of the Western Zhou period and the *shu*-style sword of the Eastern Zhou period (Jiang 2010). Even so, the gap between them still remains over a few hundred years and suggests a revival for some reason. At the moment, it is hard to speculate about the relationship, but we are looking forward to more archaeological evidence in future to write the next chapter of the life history of the willow-leaf-shaped sword.

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SIX

BIRD-PILLAR BASINS AND CYLINDRICAL VESSELS: OBJECT LINEAGE IN ANCIENT CHINA

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This case study traces the developmental sequences of a type of composite utensil with two components used during the Warring States Period (476–221 BCE) in China: the bird-pillar basins (round containers with a bird atop a central pillar rising from the flat bottom) and cylindrical vessels (lidless, cylindrical containers with a flat bottom). Bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels were not part of the traditional ritual paraphernalia of the Zhou Period (ca. 1045–256 BCE), of which the Warring States Period is the last segment, nor were they typical items in assemblages of either bronze or pottery grave goods in the mortuary sites where they were found. The two vessel types, made of either clay or bronze, were often found together in the same tomb (usually one of each, and always of the same material). In addition, these cylindrical vessels do not have lids and their measurements indicate that the bottom of the basin usually fitted nicely in or around the opening of the cylindrical vessel, as shown in [Figure 6.3](#). These patterns indicate that they were used together as a composite utensil, with the basin sitting on the cylindrical vessel. Most excavation reports failed to recognize this relationship, and research articles published so far have discussed the two vessel types separately and did not explore their function as a pair. Since the two types of objects were consistently used together, they must be studied together and in relation to each other in order to discern their function and object lineage.

The bird-pillar basins first appeared at the Jin (晋) capital of Xintian (新田) in Houma (侯马), Shanxi (山西) Province, during the early Warring States



6.1. Site map of bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels (created by author).

1. Xapingwang, Houma, Shanxi Province	2. Miaoqian, Wangrong, Shanxi Province
3. Fengshuiling, Changzhi, Shanxi Province	4. Mengjiazhang, Changzi, Shanxi Province
5. Shanxian, Henan Province	6. Hancheng, Yiyang, Henan Province
7. Yuancun, Yiyang, Henan Province	8. Mao'erling, Yuci, Shanxi Province
9. Zhaogu, Huixian, Henan Province	10. Zhuqiu, Huixian, Henan Province
11. Liulige, Huixian, Henan Province	12. Baijiacun, Handan, Hebei Province
13. Sanji, Pingshan, Hebei Province	14. Tengzhou, Shandong Province

Period. Its later distribution is concentrated in southern Shanxi, Central and southern Hebei (河北), and northern and western Henan (河南) (Figure 6.1). Except for one isolated example discovered in Shandong, all of them were found at sites in the states of Zhao (趙) (453–228 BCE), Wei (魏) (453–225 BCE), and Han (韓) (453–230 BCE), which were established by the powerful ministers of Jin, and the state of Zhongshan (中山) (ca. 379–296 BCE). Zhongshan is traditionally considered a state that was established by the Xianyu (鮮虞), a minority group from China's northern frontier, but neither textual nor archaeological evidence can provide sufficient evidence for this identification to be reliable (Wu 2017). Although Zhongshan's origin is unclear, it was annexed and ruled by the state of Wei for about three decades (ca. 407–ca. 379 BCE). Since all these states were territorial or cultural successors of the Jin, the spread of this vessel type clearly followed the expansion of Jin and its successors.

By comparing the formal attributes of these artifacts and charting their chronological changes and regional differences, this research will demonstrate a complex life history of this particular composite object and its changing utilitarian and social function to see how its form and function were shaped by various intertwined social and ritual processes. A few observations can be made regarding the life history of artifacts by analyzing the development of bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels. First, although the function and meaning of a type of artifact are related to its form and style in some significant ways, the functional and stylistic aspects of their changes do not always correspond. Because of this, I will consider them separately and analyze whether and/or how each follows its own trajectory. Second, the history of bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels shows that the functional and stylistic elements of artifacts undergo a wide range of affecting means of change, some at the same time and some in succession. These processes include: “maintenance/stasis”; diffusion; recombination with other stylistic and/or functional elements; “unconscious” transformation; and finally, conscious manipulation of the artifact type to suit specific goals of the artisans and/or the elite patron. Third, as some of these processes involve conscious manipulation, we need to pay attention to the significance of agency. Textual sources can help connect changes in material culture to the agency and actions of influential individuals, such as the Zhongshan kings, and will be investigated in addition to formal comparisons in order to provide a historical context for interpreting these changes. This research shows that a study of the object lineage of artifacts in their historical contexts and in relation to the agency of the patrons and artists can provide a productive method for understanding cultural change in ancient societies. It also demonstrates the importance of studying one artifact or type of artifact in relation to other artifacts as objects not only interact with people, but also function in association with each other.

Archaeological records often do not provide enough detail to reconstruct the full life history (“birth,” “life,” and “death”) of a single physical artifact. However, if a biography of an artifact can be viewed as the sum of relations in which it was involved at certain points of its life, such as those created at the funeral ceremony that led to its deposition (Joy 2009), a close analysis of the archaeological and ritual context could reveal important features of an object’s biography. In addition, archaeology is privileged in its ability to chart the long-term history of a certain type of artifact, such as that of the bird-pillar basin and cylindrical vessel, through analyzing their synchronic variations and diachronic changes in form, function, and use. As a complementary concept to the life history of a single object, the developmental history of a type of object can be termed object lineage. Object lineage differs from mere typological or stylistic analysis because it places objects back in the context of social relations and human actions in which they were found and engaged historically. An understanding of object lineage will inform patterns of cultural exchange, cultural transmission, and changes in social practices of the societies that used them. This case study is intended to engage these theoretical issues and to draw attention to the powerful role individual agents played. When taken together and analyzed within the relevant mortuary contexts and local history, both the specifics of the historical circumstance as well as the current discussion on cultural transmission will be informed.

PRE-WARRING STATES CENTRAL-PILLAR BASINS

Pre-Warring States basins with a central pillar have been found in Henan province. A Longshan period (ca. 3000–2000 BCE) example was found at Lutaigang (鹿台岗) site, Qixian (杞县), Henan province, and was dated around 2300 BCE (Wei 1999). Some Shang period (ca. 1600–1046 BCE) examples made of clay and bronze were found at Zhengzhou (郑州) and Anyang (安阳) (Zhongguo 1980; Henansheng et al. 1983; Henansheng et al. 1999). Similar clay basins were found in Changtaiguan (长台关) M2 (“M,” or “tomb”) in Xinyang (信阳) (Henansheng et al. 1986), and at the Erligang (二里岗) site in Zhengzhou (Ye 1985; Henansheng 1959), all dated to the first half of the Warring States period. A common feature of these basins is a central pillar with a mushroom-shaped top. They differ from the later bird-pillar basins because the central pillars are not topped with a bird and they do not have accompanying cylindrical vessels. The functions of these vessels are uncertain and various interpretations have been proposed. It is not clear whether the bird-pillar basins of the Warring States period can trace their lineage back to the Shang examples because analogous vessels are missing from archaeological finds between these two periods.

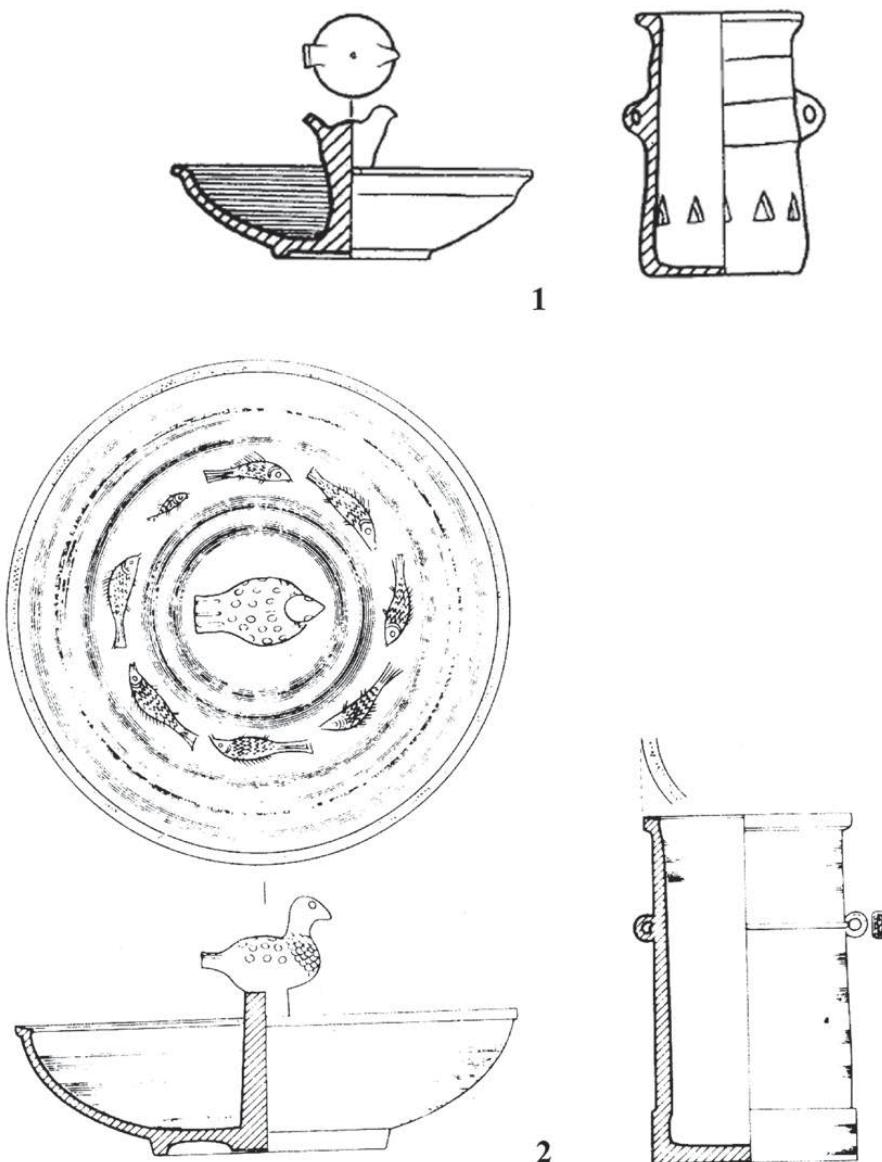
POTTERY BIRD-PILLAR BASINS AND CYLINDRICAL VESSELS:
STYLISTIC CHANGE AND TRANSMISSION

Early Warring States Period (ca. 450–ca. 375 BCE)

The earliest bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels as composite objects are found in Shanxi Province and are dated to the early Warring States period (ca. 450–ca. 375 BCE). They are rare: two sets were found at the Xiapingwang (下平望) cemetery at the Jin capital of Xintian in Houma (侯馬) Shi (administrative unit) (Figure 6.2.1) (Shanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo Houma et al. 1993, 1994), and only one set was found at the nearby Miaoqian (庙前) cemetery in Wanrong (万荣) County (Figure 6.2.2) (Shanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1994). The Xiapingwang and Miaoqian examples represent two closely related, yet slightly different, variations of the earliest bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels. The birds on basins from these two sites have round bodies, small heads, and retracted wings, and they were represented in a perching (or swimming) but alert posture. The one from M1002 at Xiapingwang has a hole that runs through the pillar from the top of the bird to the bottom of the basin. In style, the pillars appear to be derived from the round mushroom-shaped ones found at Xinyang. The Miaoqian set is more elaborately decorated than the Xiapingwang examples. First, in contrast to the plain bodies of the Xiapingwang birds, the Miaoqian bird has incised circles on the surface presumably to indicate a dotted feather pattern, which provides a more naturalistic look. Second, the Miaoqian basin has eight fish incised on its bottom interior: seven large and one small, arranged in a circle. The fish pattern probably indicates that the vessel was a water container. Third, the Miaoqian bird-pillar basin and cylindrical vessel both have “hidden patterns” in zigzag lines on their rims, and the ring handles were decorated with incised patterns. “Hidden patterns,” or *anwen* (暗紋), are visible only under an oblique light. These patterns are created on the surface of the clay by scraping the surface with a wooden or bamboo tool with a round, smooth tip when it is almost dry. The “hidden patterns” became the dominant decoration for *mingqi* (明器) (surrogate ceramic utensils made as grave goods) in large tombs in the Wei and Zhongshan states during the middle Warring States period. The cylindrical vessels from both sites are similar in that they all have two ring-shaped handles and walls slanting inward (mouth smaller than bottom); however, the Xiapingwang examples also have a row of triangular holes on their walls while the Miaoqian example does not. These openings along the bottom of the vessel indicate that they were not meant to be used as containers, although they could be used to burn charcoal or incense.

Middle Warring States Period (ca. 375–ca. 300 BCE)

Bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels started to appear in larger numbers during the middle Warring States Period (ca. 375–ca. 300 BCE) in areas controlled



6.2. Bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels, pottery, early Warring States period.

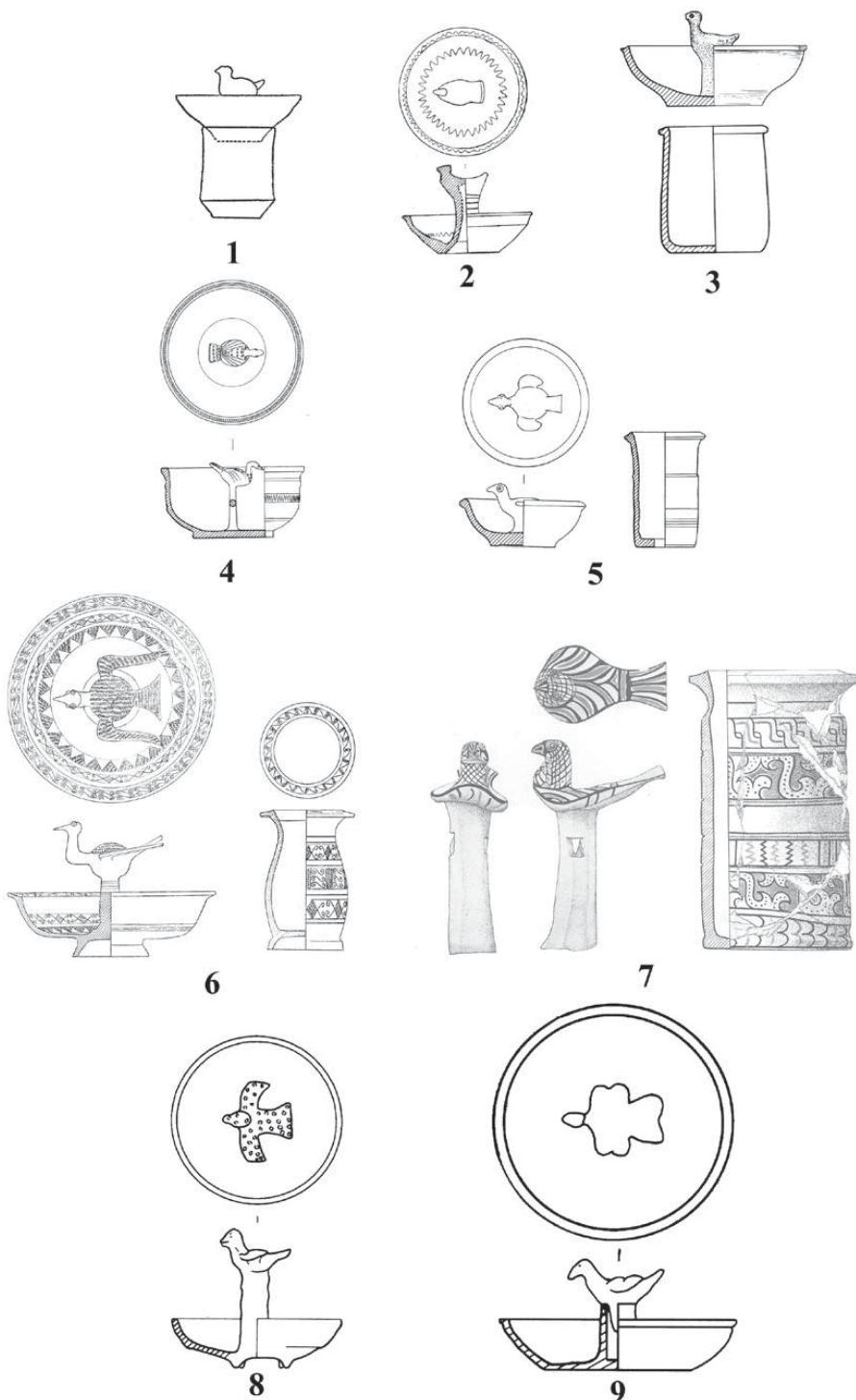
1. Xiapingwang, Houma, Shanxi Province (M1002: 7, M1002: 43) (Redrawn after Shanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo Houma Gongzuozhan 1993, Figure 8: 4, 6)
2. Miaoqiancun, Wanrong, Shanxi Province (61M1: 47, 61M1: 30) (Redrawn after Shanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1994, Figure 12: 2, 6)

by the states of Han, Zhao, Wei, and Zhongshan. In Shanxi Province, they were found at Fenshuiling (分水岭), Changzhi (长治) County (Shanxisheng Wenwu et al. 1964), Mengjiazhuang (孟家庄), Changzi (长子) County (Shanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo Jindongnan 1994), and tomb M134 at Mao'erling (猫儿岭), Yuci (榆次) County (Mao'erling 1994). The Changzhi area belonged to Han after the division of Jin by Zhao, Wei, and Han in 453 BCE and until it was

taken by Qin in 246 BCE. Among the nineteen middle Warring States period tombs excavated in 1959 at Fenshuiling, five bird-pillar basins and three cylindrical vessels were found. The one from M40, missing the bird on the top, has a pillar that has a hole through the center and is taller than the basin. Based on available images published so far, these vessels retain the early stylistic features seen at Xiapingwang, such as the shape of birds and the triangular holes on the cylindrical vessels. A group of fourteen tombs excavated at Mengjiazhuang, Changzi County, which borders Changzhi County, yielded one bird-pillar basin (M4:5) and two cylindrical vessels (M4:9 and M29:12). The two tombs, dated to the later part of the middle Warring States period (ca. 350–300 BCE), are coeval with the Changzhi tombs and the style of the bird-pillar basin is similar to the Changzhi examples as well (Figure 6.3.3), except that the bird is dotted with feather-shaped circles similar to the Wanrong example. The two cylindrical vessels from Changzi do not have triangular openings on their walls. The Warring States period tombs at Mao’erling, all small in size, belong to a public cemetery of the Zhao state. Among the fifty-five reported tombs, six bird-pillar basins and six cylindrical vessels were found. All of them can be considered evolved forms based on earlier examples seen at Houma and Wanrong. The use of *anwen* can be seen on rims of these basins, and the design later became the dominant decoration on Zhongshan examples.

In Hebei Province, such vessels were discovered at Baijiacun (百家村), Handan (邯郸) Shi (Hebeisheng Wenhuaju 1962) and Sanji (三汲), Pingshan (平山) County (Hebeisheng Wenwu 1995; Hebeisheng Wenwu 2005). At the Baijiacun cemetery, a site with forty-nine middle Warring States period tombs, six bird-pillar basins and eight cylindrical vessels were found. Based on the information given in the brief report, the birds have round bodies, small heads and tails, and are seated in a perching position (Figure 6.3.1). In shape, they are related to the earlier examples from Xiapingwang. In decoration, the vessels mainly have painted geometric designs, a tradition similar to the Huixian examples in Henan. In M21, the excavators found the basin sitting on the cylindrical vessel, thus demonstrating the original relationship between the two.

In Henan Province, these vessels appeared in Huixian (辉县) County (Zhongguo 1956), Shanxian (陕县) County (Figure 6.3.2) (Zhongguo 1994), and Yiyang (宜阳) County (Luoyang 2002; Luoyang 2003: Fig. 1). At Zhuqiu (褚丘), Huixian County, one set was found in one of the fifteen Warring States period tombs (no. 17) excavated in 1952. The bird was painted with red, yellow, and black stripes, and the cylindrical vessel has twelve triangular openings arranged in two bands on the wall. At Zhaogu (赵固), Huixian County, a bird-pillar basin and a cylindrical vessel were found in M1, which is the largest among the seven Warring States period tombs excavated in 1951. The cylindrical vessel has six bands of different sorts of patterns.



6.3. Bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels, pottery, middle Warring States period.

1. Baijiacun, Handan Municipality, Hebei Province (Redrawn after Hebeisheng Wenhuaibu Wenhua Gongzuodui 1962, figure 9: 4)

(continued)

Those found at sites adjacent to their center of origin in the Houma area were closely copied examples of earlier vessels. The ones from Fenshuiling, Changzhi County in Shanxi, Baijiacun, Handan Municipality in Hebei (Figure 6.3.1), and Shanxian County in Henan (Figure 6.3.2) closely copied the forms of the earlier examples from Xiapingwang, while the set from Mengjiazhuang, Changzi County (Figure 6.3.3) and the set from Mao'erling M134 in Yuci County followed the Miaoqian prototype. Little stylistic deviation from the early Warring States period prototypes can be detected among examples in this group, but there are two exceptions: first, some examples from Baijiacun, Handan Municipality have decorative designs painted with colorful pigments (Hebeisheng 1962) indicating connections with the pottery-making tradition further south in Henan Province. Second, although the set from M8011 at Sanji, Pingshan County (Figure 6.3.4) seems to belong to the second group with round feather patterns on the bird similar to the ones from Miaoqian and Mao'erling and its large sized basin is also similar – between 25 and 35 cm in diameter – the bird, however, represents a swimming duck as opposed to other types of birds and the cylindrical vessel has seven bands of wide grooves on its slender body.

In contrast, in regions further away from the center of origin in the Houma area, bird-pillar basins of the middle Warring States period began to exhibit major shifts in form and decoration. Instead of perching on top of the pillar, the birds are shown extending their wings as if in flight. This new type of bird-pillar basin can be found in tombs M8207, M6 (Figure 6.3.5), and M3PM at Sanji, Pingshan County in Hebei Province (Hebeisheng Wenwu 2005) (the state of Zhongshan), and Hancheng (韓城) (Luoyang 2002) and Yuancun (元村) (Luoyang, 2003), Yiyang County in Henan Province (the state of Han).

6.3 (*continued*)

2. Shanxian County, Henan Province (M2503: 12) (Redrawn after Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1994, Figure 28: 5)
3. Mengjiazhuang, Changzi County, Shanxi Province (M4: 5, M4: 9) (Redrawn after Shanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo Jindongnan Gongzuozhan 1994, Figure 12: 1, 6)
4. M8011 at Sanji, Pingshan County, Hebei Province (Redrawn after Hebeisheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 2005, Figure 249: 3)
5. M6 at Sanji, Pingshan County, Hebei Province (M6: 53, M6: 54) (Redrawn after Hebeisheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 2005, Figure 143: 3)
6. Tomb of King Cuo (M1) at Sanji, Pingshan County, Hebei Province (Redrawn after Hebeisheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1995, Figure 63)
7. Zhaogu, Huixian County, Henan Province (M1: 66–2, M1: 66) (After Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1956, plate 85)
8. Hancheng, Yiyang County, Henan Province (M6: 6) (Redrawn after Luoyangshi Di'er Wenwu Gongzuodui 2002, Figure 31: 15)
9. Yuancun, Yiyang County, Henan Province (M4: 16) (Redrawn after Luoyangshi Di'er Wenwu Gongzuodui 2003, Figure 15: 17)

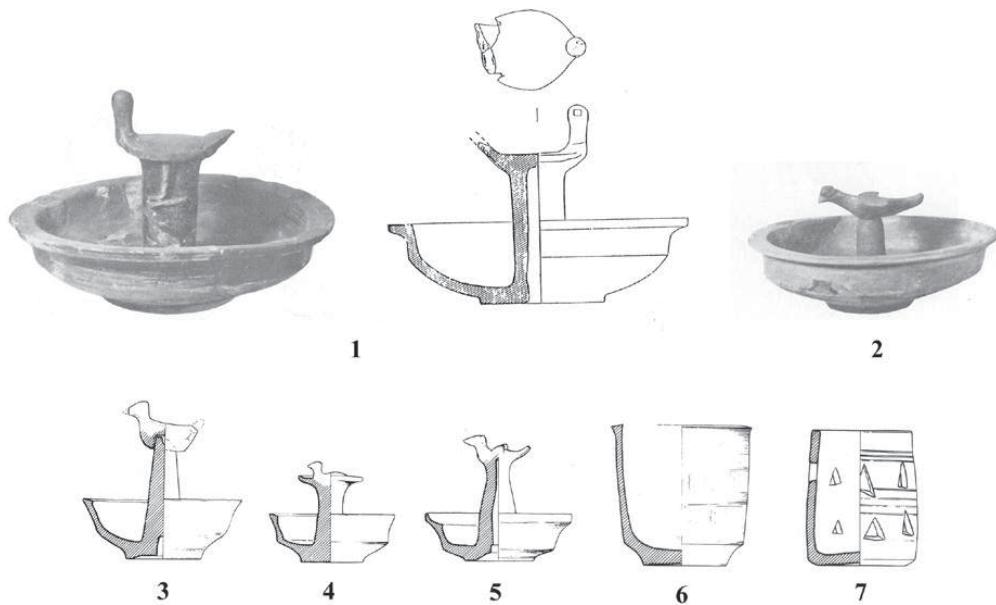
In addition to the change of the wings of the bird across the regions, adjustments in form and decoration occurred in different regions. Two new features appeared in the state of Han. The bird-pillar basin from Hancheng, Yiyang County (Luoyang 2002) in Henan Province has three short legs on the bottom of the basin (Figure 6.3.8) and is, therefore, different from the typical flat-bottomed or ring-footed basins. This new feature indicates that this type of basin was used independently without a cylindrical vessel. Among the three bird-pillar basins from Yuancun, Yiyang County (Luoyang, 2003), two have a hollow central pillar with an opening on the top, and a bird with a protrusion on the bottom that can be inserted into the central pillar (Figure 6.3.9). This design allows the bird to be taken off and inserted into other vessels if needed. Indeed, in the same tombs were found vessels shaped like *dou* (stemmed bowls) with a hole in the center that could have been used to insert a bird with an extension. Therefore, it seems that the bird and the central pillar can be recombined with other vessels, probably in order to serve some symbolic function.

Major changes in design also took place in Zhongshan during the time of King Cuo's reign at the end of the middle Warring States period. The tomb of King Cuo (M1) and seven among its ten auxiliary tombs each yielded a ceramic bird-pillar basin and cylindrical vessel set (Figure 6.3.6). Similar in style, they are all made of burnished black pottery, instead of the gray clay of earlier examples, and the entire surface of these vessels was decorated with dense *anwen* patterns including zigzags, "S" swirls, or geometric shapes. The cylindrical vessels developed a bulging belly, a narrow neck, and flaring rims. The birds became more stylized and geometric, with elongated necks, round bodies, and narrow wings. The wings were fully stretched, and the pillars grew taller, raising the birds high above the basin's rim. The overall effect was lighter and more flamboyant, suitable for use as *mingqi* at funerals of kings and his family members. Therefore, the elaborate style of the latest Zhongshan examples, found in King Cuo's tomb (M1) and auxiliary tombs, moved farther away from the archaic appearance of their predecessors.

Bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels in the state of Wei, represented by sites in Huixian County in Henan (Zhongguo 1956), followed a different developmental trajectory, especially in method of decoration. The Middle Warring States period examples from Zhaogu (Figure 6.3.7) and Zhuqu favored painted decorations in red and yellow, a dominant decorative method for pottery in the Huixian area (the state of Wei); some have a flat surface cut into the bird's back, probably for the placement of another small item.

Late Warring States Period (ca. 300–221 BCE)

Among the three large but looted Wei royal tombs at Guweicun (固围村), Huixian County, two yielded bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels (tombs



6.4. Bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels, pottery, late Warring States period.

1 & 2 Guweicun, Huixian, Henan Province (M1: 83–3, M3: 35) (After Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1956, plates 47, 71, figure 86)

3, 4, 5, 6, & 7 Mao'erling, Yuci, Shanxi Province (M129: 24, M186: 5, M208: 8, M122: 24, M101: 6) (Redrawn after Mao'erling Kaogudui 1994, Figure 10: 6, 7; Figure 12: 3, 5, 7)

1 and 3). These tombs are dated to the late Warring States period, slightly later than the Zhaogu and Zhuqiu tombs in the same area. Those items also feature birds with unnaturally flat backs (Figure 6.4.1–2). But unlike the Zhaogu and Zhuqiu examples, they rejected painted designs; instead, they feature burnished black pottery and *anwen* patterns like those displayed on the Zhongshan royal tombs examples (Figure 6.3.6), and the birds are also raised high over the rims. Compared to vessels made of gray pottery, burnished black pottery *mingqi* vessels decorated with *anwen* patterns were obvious status markers due to their delicate design and shiny surface. Since the Zhongshan royal tombs are earlier in date, the fine Zhongshan products might have inspired the style of mortuary objects in the Wei royal tombs. This Zhongshan stimulation is corroborated by the fact that *anwen* patterns appeared later than painted decoration on pottery vessels in Henan (Ye 1985). The representations of birds on the Wei examples, however, are different from the Zhongshan examples, and they are not as unified in style. In Zhongshan, the stylistic uniformity of these vessels made in this period suggests that one single workshop run by the government was responsible for their production. At Guweicun, however, the excavated examples that display birds are more diverse in morphology. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that Zhongshan and Wei productions of ceramics were interconnected systems, judging from the similarities in style between the two regions.

The examples from tombs at Mao’erling, Yuci County (except for the set from M134, which belongs to the middle Warring States period) in Shanxi Province from the State of Zhao, dated to the early part of the late Warring States period (ca. 300–221 BCE), are coeval with or slightly later than the Pingshan and Yiyang tombs, and the bird-pillar basins from these tombs also feature birds with extended wings (Figure 6.4.3–5). An isolated example of a bird-pillar basin was found in tomb M5 of Cemetery no. 2 in the ancient capital city of the state of Xue, in Tengzhou City, Shandong Province (Shandongsheng Jiningshi Wenwu Guanliju 1991). A cylindrical vessel with a short stem and a ring foot, identified as a cup in the report, was probably paired with the bird-pillar basin. The tomb was dated to the Warring States period, and the bird-pillar basin is similar in style to the examples from Mao’erling, but the detachable bird is inserted into the hollow pillar like the one from Yuancun in Henan. This shared iconographic feature found in territories of different states suggests that they had close ties despite the frequent military conflicts or geographic distance between them. Meanwhile, the development of cylindrical vessels showed more stylistic variations. Some examples retained some earlier features, such as the triangular holes and the slightly tapering bodies, but most cylindrical vessels from this period began to flare out at the mouth.

BRONZE BIRD-PILLAR BASINS AND CYLINDRICAL VESSELS: STYLISTIC CHANGE AND TRANSMISSION

The only bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels cast in bronze were found in the tombs of Zhongshan kings: one set in M1, the tomb of Cuo (Figure 6.5.c–d), and one set in M6, probably the tomb of Cuo’s father, King Cheng (Figure 6.5.a–b). M6 and its auxiliary tombs were found within the walls of the Zhongshan capital Lingshou (灵寿) located in Sanji, Pingshan County, Hebei Province, while M1 and its auxiliary tombs are located about 2 kilometers west of the city. Both tombs are dated to the second half of the fourth century BCE in the middle Warring States period. These discoveries, including the bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels, demonstrated that Zhongshan rulers adopted and altered elements of the material culture from other regions, and created and displayed artifacts in an effort to forge a new public image that signified their new status in relation to other contending political entities (Wu 2004).

The bronze examples of both vessel types (Figure 6.5) are quite different from the clay versions in the same tombs (Figure 6.3.5–6), indicating that the bronze versions did not copy the pottery prototypes slavishly. First, on the central pillar, a bird of prey replaced the doves or duck on the pottery examples. A hawk-like bird is shown with curled feathers and its head turned to one side. Second, two ring handles were added both to the basin and the cylindrical vessel. It can be deduced that the Zhongshan official bronze workshops



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

6.5. Bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels from the Zhongshan royal tombs at Sanji, Pingshan County, Hebei Province, bronze, middle Warring States period.

a & b. From M6 (Tomb of King Cheng) c & d. From M1 (Tomb of King Cuo)
(Photos by Xiaolong Wu)

during King Cheng's time adopted the basic shape of clay bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels and made more elaborate versions with bronze. The bronze basin from Cuo's tomb resembles the one from King Cheng's tomb, but is more elaborate in shape and decoration. The comparison indicates that Cuo's bronze workers based their design on the earlier bronze example, but added their own innovations.

The bronze cylindrical vessels suggest that bronze workers also consulted their own local prototypes. Instead of simply copying the forms of the clay cylindrical vessels, we can see that the bronze examples from these two Zhongshan royal tombs followed prototypes from the traditional central Zhou bronze industry. Bronze cylindrical vessels with lids have been found in a few Western Zhou period (ca. 1045–771 BCE) tombs, such as tomb 13 of the Yu state cemetery at Baoji (宝鸡) Zhuyuanguo (竹园沟). Based on textual and epigraphic sources, Qiu Xigui connected these vessels with the bronze cylindrical containers found in Han period (206 BCE–220 CE) tombs, and argued that they be called *xing* (銜), as the inscription on one of them referred to itself by that name (Qiu 1987). Sun Hua has pointed out that the cylindrical vessel from Cuo's tomb also borrowed from the Western Zhou cylindrical vessels (Sun 2003). Therefore, the shape of these vessels from the Zhongshan tombs might have been inspired by earlier *xing* liquid containers, instead of the pottery cylindrical vessels. Although Zhongshan cylindrical vessels were stylistically related to the *xing* vessels, they must have served different functions. The Western Zhou and Han *xing* vessels all have lids and are wine containers; the two Zhongshan bronze cylindrical vessels lack lids and were probably not used as wine containers. Their combined use with bird-pillar basins betrays a ritual function.

The spatial relationship between the official ceramic workshops and bronze foundries might help explain the similarities and differences between the clay and bronze versions of these vessels found in the Zhongshan royal tombs. The survey at the Zhongshan capital at Lingshou revealed rich remains of official workshops and indicates that a ceramic workshop area is adjacent to but separated from the much larger area of bronze and iron foundries (Hebeisheng Wenwu 2005: 22–6). On the one hand, the close proximity of ceramic and bronze workshops could have provided knowledge of products in each other. On the other hand, separation between bronze and ceramic workshops might have contributed to the divergence of shape and design between the bronze and ceramic versions of these vessels; bronze workers and potters probably worked within their own organizational, technological, and iconographical systems when creating these vessels.

More importantly, the existence of elaborate bronze bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels is reflective of the two Zhongshan rulers' desire for magnificent courtly display. Not only was the iconography changed and decoration

made more elaborate, but the material was upgraded to bronze, much more prestigious than clay. Unlike the pottery surrogates made as *mingqi* for the kings' funerals, the bronze ones were probably used and displayed in ceremonies at the court or the ancestral temple while the two rulers were still alive. All these innovations and changes signify the sophistication and power of the Zhongshan rulers.

Change and innovation were more pronounced on items produced during King Cuo's reign (ca. 327–313 BCE). Just as the pottery bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels of Cuo's time were drastically new in style (Figure 6.3.6), their bronze counterparts also showed several major changes (Figure 6.5.c–d). First, the bronze example from Cuo's tomb is much larger in size and more ornate than the examples found in his father's tomb, M6. Cuo's bird-pillar basin is twice as large as his father's, standing 47.5 cm tall. The bird on the bronze bird-pillar basin in Cuo's tomb shows more fine details, such as feather patterns in relief in comparison to the example from M6. In addition, the iconography was further enriched by adding a turtle at the center of the basin to support the pillar, and a serpent clutched in the bird's talons. Cuo's basin is unique also because it has an intricately designed base with cutout designs of interlacing *panchi* (蟠螭), or coiled horn-less dragons. The base supports a bulging stem, which in turn supports the basin. The base and stem thus elevate the basin much higher than the one from M6, which is only supported by a shallow ring foot. King Cuo's cylindrical vessel is covered with abstract interlacing *panhui* (蟠虺) (coiled serpents) and sits on three mythological animals (*lin* 麟) cast in the round. The example from M6 only has three narrow bands of abstract patterns and does not have supporting animals.

Moreover, their dimensions and inscriptions suggest that the bronze basin from Cuo's tomb was used separately from the cylindrical vessel. For the set found in M6, the base diameter of the basin's ring foot and the mouth diameter of the cylindrical vessel are 18.7 cm and 17 cm respectively, so the basin can fit snugly on top of the cylindrical vessel. The measurements for the examples from Cuo's tomb are 33.6 cm and 24 cm respectively, and it is unlikely that the basin was able to balance on the cylindrical vessel. Instead of sitting on a cylindrical vessel, the basin is elevated by its own base. The workshop inscriptions on the two vessels suggest that they were used separately. The inscriptions on the basin reads: "the eighth year (of King Cuo's reign), overseer of the Yeyun (冶匀) (workshop), artisan Qiu (丘)." The inscription on the cylindrical vessel reads: "Zuoshiku (左使库) (workshop), artisan Cai (蔡)." Although the inscription on the cylindrical vessel does not include a date, it was probably made a couple of years later than the basin, because its workshop Zuoshiku did not appear in inscriptions until the tenth year. Therefore, it seems that the bird-pillar basin functioned on its own for several years before the cylindrical vessel was cast so as to complete the set before Cuo's death. The early date of

the basin also suggests that it was not originally made as a *mingqi* funeral object to be buried in the tombs. As a result, the basin diverged drastically from its predecessors in design and in its relation to the cylindrical vessel, and can be viewed as the first clear evidence for the “delinking” of the two vessel types in both form and function.

In summary, the bronze bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels made for the Zhongshan kings experienced major shifts in use and function. Although the bronze versions were based on the pottery prototypes in concept, the Zhongshan bronze workshops relied on technological and iconographic programs within the bronze industry for the design of these vessels, and altered some formal features that were typical in the ceramic tradition. In addition, King Cuo’s bronze bird-pillar basin was once used separately from the cylindrical vessel, and a new iconographic program was introduced for its design.

This indirect cultural transmission can be discussed in both its technical and social contexts. On the one hand, bronze casting allowed more elaborate designs and finer detail. The sculptural forms of the animals and their fine decorative details on Cuo’s items are technically unpractical in clay. On the other hand, the official workshops could not have operated independently; the artisans’ choices must have been shaped by the needs and desires of their royal patrons. In the case of King Cuo, unprecedented status was expressed in unprecedented visual display. Since Cuo was the first Zhongshan ruler to acquire the title of *wang* (王), or king, the enhanced design of these vessels can be understood as part of a larger propaganda program of King Cuo aimed at bolstering his power and transforming his image as a king.

ICONOGRAPHY AND FUNCTION

So far no direct evidence is available to ascertain the function of bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels, or the iconographic meaning of the bird motif. A widely held interpretation is that the bronze bird-pillar basin from King Cuo’s tomb (Figure 6.5.c–d) was used as a lamp, and the bird was used to support the wick (Sun 1996: 1–15). Citing works of ancient Chinese mythology, Sun Ji argued that the bird on the basin symbolized the sun bird on whose back the sun travels through the sky, while the flame on the bird’s back represented the sun. He further suggested that the basin was a sacred lamp used to illuminate sacrificial offerings (Sun 1996: 1–15). However, Sun did not consider bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels as composite utensils used together. In addition, the earlier pottery examples differ significantly in shape and iconography from Cuo’s bronze basin. Most birds on the pottery basins look like doves or pigeons; one from a Zhongshan tomb (M8011 at Pingshan, Figure 6.3.4) represents a duck. And all early examples represent perching birds, inconsistent with the usual representations of the sun bird in flight. While the

birds of the bronze basin have rather flat backs, most ceramic birds have round, convex backs that are not suitable for supporting a wick. The more stylized bird representations on the pottery bird-pillar basins from the tomb of King Cuo of Zhongshan (M1) and its auxiliary tombs were categorized by the excavators as swallows ([Figure 6.3.6](#)), and they further proposed that these bird-pillar basins signify the Shang ethnogenesis myth in which Jiandi (简狄), when bathing, swallowed the egg left by a black bird and gave birth to the ancestor of the Shang clan, Qi (契) (Hebeisheng Wenwu 1995: 165). If examined closely, however, these birds still resemble doves or pigeons, judging from their small heads, long necks, and wedge-shaped tails instead of the bi-forked tails of swallows. The flexibility in choice of bird representations contradicts the sun bird interpretation, and suggests that this type of vessel experienced shifts in function and signification even if we accept Sun Ji's interpretation of the bronze example from King Cuo's tomb.

In order to interpret the function of an artifact, we can examine the archaeological setting in which it was found. All the bird-pillar basin and cylindrical vessel combinations were found in tombs as part of an assemblage of pottery ritual vessels which also included more typical types, such as *ding* (鼎), *dou* (豆), *hu* (壺), *pan* (盘), and *yi* (匜), and were *mingqi*, objects made for the deceased during the middle Warring States period. Their delicate design and exquisite decoration further betray their non-utilitarian nature and their use as ritual objects for ceremonial and symbolic purposes. Many other sculptural representations of birds also started to appear on wine or water containers beginning in the eighth century BCE and onward. Judging from the correlation between bird motifs and water containers, the bird-pillar basins were probably used as water containers for special ritual functions. Since the early cylindrical vessels have triangular piercing in their walls, charcoal may have been placed in them so as to heat the liquid in the basin or to burn incense.

The birds on the two bronze basins from the tombs of the Zhongshan kings ([Figure 6.5](#)), however, differ drastically from their clay counterparts. Judging from their features and the fact that the one in King Cuo's tomb grasps a snake, we can consider them as representations of birds of prey such as eagles or hawks. As a scene of predator and prey, the basin from Cuo's tomb is an iconographic parallel of the bronze screen stand found in the same tomb representing a tiger devouring a fawn. As visual signifiers, both images suggest the power and prowess of their owner. Tiger and eagle are often associated with martial valor, as shown by their appearance on weapons such as a *ge* (戈) halberd found in the tomb of a Zhao minister near Taiyuan (Shanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1996: 91). Seen in a broader context, these birds are only one part of a visual program of complex iconography in the midst of which King Cuo presented himself in his life. Other bronze furnishings in Cuo's tomb also feature dragons and phoenixes on a bronze table, winged beasts cast in the round, and other

mythological animals. The bird-pillar basin and cylindrical vessel constituted part of the total iconographic program and participated in the visual construction of a magnificent, powerful, and innovative personage, King Cuo.

DISCUSSION

If a visual object, such as the type of vessels discussed here, is treated as an information package in cultural transmission, its content can be broken down into different components. Here we see two basic components: one includes its basic physical and visual properties, and the other its function and purpose. The two categories are interrelated yet can be separated for the purposes of analysis. Each category can be further divided; for instance, we can discuss the physical and visual aspects of pottery bird-pillar basins in terms of size, weight, quality, and color of clay (gray, gray black, or black, burnished or not), shape of the basin (shallow or deep, large or small), type and pose of the bird (doves, ducks, or birds of prey, contracted or extended wings, depicted alone or with other animals), and decoration (plain, incised patterns, *anwen*, or painted patterns). In the process of cultural transmission, the original combination of these attributes can be broken down; for instance, the sub-categories of form and style often break free from each other and recombine to create new styles or iconography. As has been demonstrated, this reconfiguration could be triggered by technical change, such as the transition from gray to burnished black pottery; or interregional interaction, such as painted versus *anwen* decorations; or new demands of the patron, such as the transformation from simple clay funerary artifacts to elaborate, impressive bronze vessels for royal display.

The function and purpose of an artifact are complicated and elusive, but here the representational image and how each object was used in its own historical context are the guides to interpretation. Changes in the physical and visual features of these objects are often demanded by, and thus reflective of, changes in their function and connotation. Individual patrons as agents could choose to change the function of a type of artifact and its intended message either by altering its physical form or by arbitrarily assigning new meanings or functions. For instance, the innovative spirit manifest in King Cuo's bronze artifacts betrays the king's attempt to use elaborate visual display to legitimize his newly acquired kingly status. Even so, changes in use and intended meaning do not necessarily entail changes in form; under different historical contexts the same artifact could be assigned new meanings or functions (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 170; Chapters 1 and 11, this volume). As Gombrich observed in a study of decorative arts, "meanings attributed to designs change from period to period and area to area" (1984: 223). As a result, investigation of the context of each individual artifact's creation and use becomes essential for the study

of the life histories of artifacts. Thus, we have examined the physical body, the archaeological setting, and the historical context in order to reconstruct how the artifacts were used and thereby to re-establish the role it played in the life of the community and its patrons.

In the case of the bird-pillar basin and cylindrical vessel combinations, a new cultural package was born from multiple factors. The basins with central pillars, the worship of birds, and cylindrical vessels together gave birth to this set of ritual vessels. After its initial formation, the transmission of them, both temporally and spatially, took various courses. The process involved borrowing and exchanging visual elements and technologies, which converged to create rich variations across time and space. The trajectories of change were determined by social and geographical factors. For instance, the similarities between Handan and Huixian examples (painted decoration) and the similarities between Pingshan and Changzhi examples (shape and *anwen* decoration) during the middle Warring States period were probably due to their geographical proximity, even though the areas were controlled by different states. During the middle and late Warring States period, burnished black pottery and *anwen* patterns appeared in both Pingshan and Huixian areas, but in this case the two regions were separated by the state of Zhao, so that these borrowings were probably created by social forces and not geographical proximity. For instance, both Pingshan M1 and M6 and the Guiweicun tombs are large royal tombs, and the exquisite burnished black pottery decorated with *anwen* found in these tombs were probably prestige markers reserved for the kings and their families. The shared traits between the two regions might be related to the historical fact that Zhongshan was under Wei rule for several decades.

The components of a cultural package often have fluid relations, and peoples near geographical or cultural borders often exchanged ideas, materials, and even artisans. These circumstances often lead to what has been called cultural hybrids, or eclectic forms and/or designs in material culture where elements of several traditions are combined to create a new expression. A high level of hybridity can be found in many Zhongshan artifacts, such as in the bronze bird-pillar basins and the animal sculptures of predator and prey. These features have been categorized as indicative of a northern heritage for the Zhongshan people, or at least its leaders. Instead of attributing these unique items as static remnants of cultural “otherness” of the Zhongshan, we may assume the patron was an agent who adopted objects and altered visual elaboration of them from diverse traditions in order to create and use material culture suitable for his socio-political goals.

In order to interpret changes in material culture, therefore, we need to examine the processes of cultural transmission both in a broader political context and in relation to the agency of certain individuals, as suggested by Eerkens and Lippo (2007: 266). The concept of agency has a long history and

various definitions. In general, it refers to both the conscious and volitional actions of human individuals and their involvement with the social and physical environment. As a result, agency is often discussed in relation to structure, the norms or rules of doing things imposed on agents by a society (Gardner 2008: 95). Both agency and societal structure are emphasized in archaeological theory because of the assumed symbiotic relation between the two when examined under specific contexts, which defines how humans engage with their worlds, including the material world (Gardner 2008: 104). Agency-related inquiries were brought up by early pioneers of New Archaeology, but were not taken up as a major concern until the 1980s when the “post-processualists” in archaeology started to challenge the faceless, monolithic accounts of the past from various theoretical standpoints. The concept of agency has since been used in a wide spectrum of archaeological theories and methods, including by Marxists, structuralists, symbolists, and feminists (Dobres and Robb 2000: 6–8). The notion that artifacts themselves can be treated as having social lives and agency in some ways similar to human persons has led to a focus in archaeological writing on the life history of artifacts and the interactions between people and objects (Gell 1998: 16–19; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Hoskins 2006: 77–81). Archaeologists are now interrogating material artifacts for stories or events that surround their production, exchange, use, discard, reuse, and final deposition in the archaeological record in order to fully understand both the changing meaning of an object and the people with whom they interacted (Kopytoff 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999; LaMotta and Schiffer 2001: 21).

Recent studies on ancient China have also discussed the social agency of artifacts that had been buried in tombs or deposited in other ways but have acquired new lives and new meanings in totally different social conditions after being redeployed thousands of years later (Chapters 1, 3 and 11, this volume). A biographical approach to objects entails more detailed narratives about the artifacts involved, knowledge of the persons who made and used them, and relations between objects and persons such as has been attempted here.

In this case study, the discussion on agency focuses on human agency, instead of the agency of artifacts, to analyze the aspirations of a powerful patron such as King Cuo. Knowledge of the historical context and his political goals were essential in understanding the innovations seen in the bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels. There a government-sponsored program transformed the image of the regime through display of elaborate material culture, and the bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels are but one example of the value and power placed on displaying newly constituted emblems of his reign and attendant authority as envisioned by Cuo. Instead of merely copying the past or current taste of his peers, for instance, King Cuo and his workshop officials, artisans, and probably ritual specialists altered forms and amplified the function of locally

known funerary item types by casting them in bronze in greatly adjusted and embellished surfaces, shapes, and iconography for his own purposes.

Meanwhile, this emphasis on human agency needs to be balanced against analysis of social and other forces and processes such as “maintenance/stasis” mentioned in the introduction. “Maintenance/stasis” is understood here as the impact “structure” has on the production and use of artifacts. For instance, we have little information on the artisans of this time. Nevertheless, the difference between the clay and bronze versions of the same artifact types in the tombs of King Cuo and King Cheng indicate that the knowledge and working habits of the “structure” of different workshops apparently impacted the way change was accomplished. However, adherence to tradition was clearly combined with innovation in the case of Cuo’s workshops. The bronze casters did not slavishly copy the design of pottery prototypes of bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels, and the combined agency of artisans and kings even under the constraining conditions of their “structures” created bronze artifacts that are different, yet related to their pottery counterparts. In addition, “unconscious transformation,” created unwittingly by errors in borrowing through diffusion and cultural transmission, could also have contributed to the regional and period differences in the style of the pottery bird-pillar basins and cylindrical vessels.

Finally, two further observations about the value and problems of using both textual and archaeological data as evidence may be reported as a result of this case study. First, a question arises when the object lineage of a type of artifact is treated as the life history of a single unit in material culture. At what point does an artifact change so much and become a totally different type of object? The researcher often has to decide, from an etic point of view, the criteria for including or excluding an artifact in a lineage. This places agency in the hands of us as students of ancient societies. Second, textual sources can sometimes provide clues about the criteria used by their original owners, and archaeology of historical periods can also contribute to inquiries about cultural transmission and agency. Written documents, either historical texts or epigraphy, often shed much light on factors affecting the content, context, and mode of transmission, but according to the author and his/her motivations. Nonetheless, by providing details of the life history of artifacts, individuals involved in their production and use, and the relation between objects and particular human actors we can often find at least some inferences about the contingency of agency of commissions and their supposed reception.

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SEVEN

TOILETRIES AND THE PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL MEMORY FROM THE WARRING STATES THROUGH THE HAN (FOURTH CENTURY BCE TO THIRD CENTURY CE)

Sheri A. Lullo

What have been referred to in Chinese archaeological reports as “everyday objects” or “everyday utensils” began to be placed in burials across regions of China beginning in the late Warring States (戰國) period of the Zhou (周) dynasty (ca. fifth century BCE). In the context of broader changes in burial content and structure, they are viewed as part of new ideologies of death that saw the soul of the deceased as enduring in an afterlife. Specifically, these new burial goods, which included household items and personal possessions, have been interpreted as provisions for an imagined afterworld modeled on the deceased’s former existence. As such, they also communicated social status, offering the dead access to a variety of comforts, leisure activities, and protections often afforded only by those who enjoyed wealth. Recently, scholars of early China have begun to reconsider these items from a new perspective as objects provoking emotion in death (Wu 2010; Poo 2011). They have proposed this hypothesis based on a correlation with the category of items referred to as *shengqi* (生器) in the documentary record, specifically the Warring States philosopher Xunzi’s (荀子) (ca. 312–230 BCE) identification of such objects as the deceased’s former possessions, deployed in death ritual in order to elicit grief. This provocative perspective has opened up inquiry into how we can further understand this corpus of ostensibly ordinary items found in burials. For example, Wu has identified a variety of case studies from various dynastic periods in which specific burial goods could be personally linked to deceased individuals. In death, he suggests, these items acted as

“traces” of the deceased, evoking both his/her presence and absence (Wu 2010: 167).

This chapter builds upon this novel approach by offering a more focused study of the toilet box, a set of items found in burials beginning in the Warring States period and into the Han (漢) (fourth century BCE–third century CE), which offers particularly compelling evidence for the capacity of commonplace items to evoke individuals’ personal biographies (Figure 7.1). Placed with both females and males, toilet boxes are lacquered containers filled with a variety of tools for beautification, as well as adornments and other personal items. It is argued that because of their intimate connection to the body, and to individuals, the contents of the toilet box offer rich data for understanding the emotive potential of ordinary objects found in burials.

In addition to exploring the evocative qualities of toiletries as personal items, I look to archaeology and texts in order to highlight the processes by which these objects of daily use gathered meaning across contexts of life and death. These processes can be understood from two perspectives: on the one hand, we can examine the biographies of specific toilet sets over the relatively short time span of the owner’s life cycle; and on the other hand, look more globally at the life history of toilet boxes as an object category deployed in burial across centuries of charted data. In the case of the first perspective, the reframing of these items within the context of funerary ritual – when they moved from being practical items used in life to symbolic and potent reminders of those lost – indicates a new development in their biographies as personal sets. Funerary rituals are commonly cited as the means by which objects made specifically for death were activated and made meaningful. Few, however, have written about the impact of these ceremonies on mundane items. I therefore draw upon the work of Howard Williams, who in addressing the mortuary remains of medieval Britain, has focused more attention on the engagement between people and things within funerary contexts than on particularized meanings conveyed by objects. He considers the structure, staging, and spectacle of the rituals as strategies for shaping social memories of the dead, and appreciates the materiality of objects as central to the efficacy of such events.

In addition, Williams’s focus on the deployment of material culture during funerary rituals also serves to highlight the importance of the placement of



7.1. Toilet box with five smaller containers from a burial at Dongyang, Xuchi County (Jiangsu). (Digital illustration after Zhongguo Qiqi Quanji Bianji Weiyuanhui 1998, fig. 281, p. 166.)

toiletries within burials, which corresponds to the second perspective addressed in this chapter. The boxes themselves are commonly found in one of two different locations of the final tableau: either alongside the corpse in the coffin, or in the separate spaces or compartments that surround the deceased. As will be discussed, these locations, in fact, point to different moments or phases of the funerary ceremonies, and therefore indicate that toiletries were deployed in different ways, perhaps to the end of fulfilling the needs of different groups among funerary audiences. Thus, in the final part of this chapter, I address the variable life histories of the toilet box.

ITEMS FROM DAILY LIFE IN MORTUARY CONTEXT

The items from daily life that begin to appear in burials of the late Warring States period were enmeshed within a complex set of changes in both tomb structures and contents that were symptomatic of the interstate warfare and socio-political transitions taking place above ground. To summarize what others have already discussed in detail (see, for example, Poo 1993: 165–7; Falkenhausen 2006; Lai 2015: 55–98), as the integrity of the Zhou domain began to falter, the highly codified systems for expressing rank and ritual authority based on blood ties and clan affiliation gradually began to collapse. Most scholars agree that beginning around the fifth century BCE, burials reflect this shift in the means by which power and status were materialized. Earlier burials of the Shang 商 and early–mid Zhou emphasized group affiliation, access to the ancestors, and correspondent ritual authority as embodied by items such as bronze ritual vessels or musical instruments, which rendered the space of the tomb akin to that of a temple (Wu 1998a). In contrast, those of the late Zhou began to focus attention on deceased individuals and their everyday, often ostentatious, material existences (Poo 1993, 2011; Falkenhausen 2006: 391). Evidence for this can be observed in accumulating objects from daily life, such as tableware sets and food provisions, furniture, musical instruments suitable for private entertainment, tomb figurines of servants and entertainers, and items of personal grooming and adornment (Thote 1999; Erickson 2010: 53; Lai 2015: 175). In many instances, by the Han dynasty, these items had replaced bronze ritual vessels as the principal burial goods.

Objects of daily life associated the space of the tomb with the domestic sphere; in many contexts, the multi-compartmental structure of the grave itself (in both vertical pit graves and horizontally oriented tombs) reinforced this idea by evoking rooms of a household. In addition, certain objects and carved imagery suggest a journey of some kind (Wu 1994; Lai 2002, 2005; Wu 2017). In effect, the mundane items that are usually assigned to the category of objects of daily life were at the center of developing ideologies of death focused on providing a well-provisioned haven and comfortable existence for the souls of

deceased individuals. Moreover, as implied above, they also became the primary markers of wealth and status as displayed in death (Thote 1999; Wu 2017). To be sure, scholars have recognized the fine craftsmanship exhibited by burial goods of this new category, and much has been written about a lively artistic dialogue across such mediums as bronze, lacquer, and textiles that contributed to the development of increasingly complex and refined ornamental schemes and design motifs (see Rawson 1989; Watson 1998; Mackenzie 1999; Chapter 6, this volume).

Thus, objects from daily life have been acknowledged as significant components of mortuary programs in their dual roles as essential items for use in an afterlife and as material manifestations of social status. The fact that the sphere of the grave to a certain extent limited the quantity of items placed with the dead also suggests that the objects of daily life chosen for burial were carefully selected by the living as representative of the personal identities of deceased individuals.

SHAPING SOCIAL MEMORY

Only recently have scholars begun to explore the symbolic dimensions of everyday objects. Indeed, their meaning in burial assemblages does not prompt the kinds of questions we have readily asked of other comparatively special items, such as silk banners, jade suits, or *mingqi* (明器) (spiritual vessels) replica pieces, which were made expressly for death (Wu 1992; Wu 1997; Liu 2005). The latter realized their potential outside of the mundane world and must be analyzed in terms of more nuanced beliefs concerning death and the otherworldly realm. Everyday objects, on the other hand, were often derived from the mundane world and brought into funerary contexts, carrying with them pre-existing functions and practical associations that less often beg further analysis. I believe that this reason is partly why, in the past, few have considered the potential for these items to operate in contexts of death in ways beyond their immediate capacities.

One exception has been the work of Lai, who in a study focused on Eastern Zhou (東周) burials demonstrates that lamps were lit throughout the funerary ceremonies as indicators of the changing ontological state of the deceased, and later acted as illuminators along the perilous afterlife journey of the soul (Lai 2002). Key to his analysis is a careful examination of funerary rituals as recorded in the texts of the *Yi Li* (儀禮) (Protocols of Ceremonies) and the *Li Ji* (禮記) (Book of Rites), which include protocols for the use of lamps at critical moments during the ceremonies. Lai implies that it was for the benefit of funerary audiences that lamps were used to present the progress of the transformation of the deceased from corpse to ancestor. His findings assert that rather ordinary items could assume symbolic value with regard to both the

transformation and the transition of the dead, and that such new meaning was activated through ritual.¹

In addition, Beckman has brought to light a case of even more personal engagement of funerary audiences with mundane burial objects. In a thoughtful analysis using material evidence from Warring States burials in the Chu (楚) cultural sphere, she has described how garments used in what was known in texts as the Greater Dressing – a second, and specifically public, event in which the body was prepared for burial – were deployed as materializations of both the status of the deceased and social relationships between the living and the dead. Beckman notes how garments were positioned and wrapped around the body in ways that called attention to intricate details of their design, such as decorative trim and colored linings, sites where status was delineated and recognized (Beckman 2006: 78). Moreover, as gifts from mourners, social relationships were ordered through the garment's proximity to the body and honored into death. These notions are supported by Han period contexts in present-day Jiangsu, where detailed inventories of gifted garments and fabrics (including their monetary values) have been found preserved on wooden tablets in the coffins of the dead (Yangzhou Bowuguan 1987). As in Lai's study, Beckman presents a compelling example of ways in which conventional items, when deployed ritually in association with deceased individuals, functioned to mediate relationships between the living and the dead on a more intimate level.

The lighting of lamps and the wrapping of bodies in gifted garments are both examples of what Williams has referred to as the “strategies of commemoration” that comprise funerary rituals. In his investigations of burial contexts of medieval Britain, Williams is interested in the multi-sensory impact that material culture had on funerary audiences in regard to both the transition of the dead and the ways in which individuals were remembered (Williams 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010). His work builds upon the ideas of Hertz, whose classic study of social responses to death among the Dayak peoples of Indonesia emphasized the importance of funerals as a means of dramatizing death as a process rather than an immediate, biological reality (Hertz [1960] 2009). Hertz explained that death rituals were designed by the living to initiate and realize the safe transformation of the deceased from lifeless body to eternal ancestor, therefore acknowledging and highlighting human desires for agency in the care and fate of the dead (see also Van Gennep 1960; Metcalf and Huntington 2008). Using Hertz's model, Williams has articulated the funeral as a sequence of engagements between people and things, thereby underscoring the visual and material as central and vital to the efficacy of the ritual process. For example, in an article focused on sixth-century inhumation graves at West Heslerton, North Yorkshire, Williams describes particularized acts of deposition, such as the deliberate fragmentation of weapons or the concealment of the deceased's

face or body beneath shields (Williams 2007). He characterizes each of these instances as generative of “emotive force,” actions intended to impact an audience at different points throughout the composition of the grave in order to communicate the progress of transition. Williams contends that these various actions are noteworthy because they extended death transition as a presentation of a sequence of images of the dead, creating for the living “memorable sensory engagements” with material culture that rendered the process visible, real, and enduring (Williams 2006: 144; see also Parker Pearson [1999] 2001: 193). Moreover, these engagements – what Jones has called “technologies of remembrance” – would have evoked specific memories of the dead while allowing others to recede (Jones 2003; Williams 2006). Thus “strategies of commemoration” refer to the multitude of ways that material culture aids in creating and shaping social memories of the dead.

Williams’s ideas are useful here for several reasons. First, rather than simply seeing death rituals as a means to constructing the final burial tableau in preparation for a posthumous existence, he acknowledges their importance to funerary audiences as occasions for negotiating an idealized and lasting identity for deceased individuals. Second, his approach enables us to appreciate the progression of death ritual as an intermediate context during which objects may have accrued new meaning. Finally, Williams’s perspective on the “emotive force” of objects highlights particular moments when objects were used to achieve greater resonance with funerary audiences. These moments, moreover, may have even elicited feelings of bereavement and grief. Such may have been the case during the drama of the lighting of lamps, which according to Lai, occurred, for example, at the official declaration of death and when the body was moved within the house from the position of host to that of guest, which was part of its symbolic departure from the realm of the living (Lai 2002: 24–5). In regard to the bestowal of garments, we can imagine that these were not simply mechanical actions, but specific instances in which mourners would have had opportunities to participate in the preparation of deceased individuals. In fact, these were the final rites that dealt directly with the physical body. By contributing burial shrouds to the deceased, mourners were able to actively participate in events intended to facilitate death transitions. Such moments may have been occasions for poignant displays of emotion.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, feelings of grief in death have been acknowledged in the documentary record for early China. Citing Xunzi, both Wu and Poo have explained that *shengqi* were placed in burials in order to call attention to the fact that they were no longer to be used by those deceased, thus accentuating the idea of death (Wu 2010: 165–6; Poo 2011: 29–31). In Wu’s discussion, which can be found in his book *The Art of the Yellow Springs* (2010), he translates *shengqi* as “lived objects,” effectively underscoring their significance as items with which the deceased once

actively engaged, awareness of which for funerary audiences rendered them emotionally potent. He even signaled out the items of the toilet box as exemplary “traces” of deceased individuals (Wu 2010: 167). These provocative ideas are treated only briefly in the book by Wu, whose larger aim is to explore grander facets of tomb design and the material culture of death across multiple periods of imperial China. In what follows, I will elucidate the multi-dimensional ways in which the items of the toilet box offer an entrée into personal biographies, which during funerary ceremonies may have impacted the living emotionally and played an important role in shaping social memory.

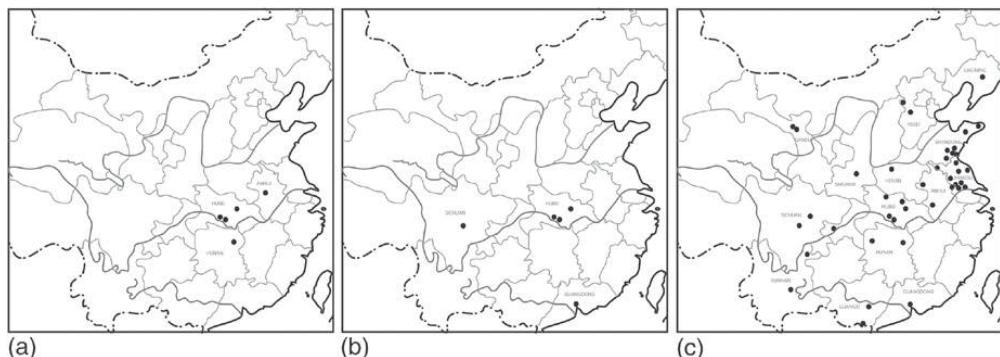
TOILET BOXES

Toilet boxes are round or sometimes square lacquered boxes, called *lian* 爐, which are filled with a variety of tools and items used in practices of beautification and personal adornment. The containers themselves are mainly painted lacquerwares crafted from cores of carved or bent wood, ramie fabric, and sometimes bamboo. They are most commonly cylindrical in form with a greater width than height and a cover with walls that extend over the sides of the vessel proper. It should be noted that items referred to as *lian* in archaeological reports were not all used as cases for toiletries. Some have been found containing foodstuffs or imitation coins; others are simply discovered empty and their purpose remains unknown. Those used in this study have all been found containing items that could be used in beautification routines.

Of these, and from their earliest appearance in burial, most toilet boxes contain bronze mirrors and sets of wooden combs, though many have also included bronze brush handles, tweezers, ring-headed knives, hairpins, and substances, such as white or black powders and oils, which were probably used as cosmetics and facial creams. In addition, a variety of other small items that have no apparent role in beautification regimens have been found within these boxes, indicating that they may have also functioned as repositories for a host of items linked to personal identity. I will return to these items in more detail below.

While the earliest boxes constituted a single level of storage space, those into the early and middle Han grew in complexity, with an added level (and in some cases, three levels) for storage, and interior partitions or, more commonly, a series of smaller boxes of various shapes nestled inside. As for décor, toilet boxes were often intricately painted and/or lavishly ornamented, and in some cases inlaid with precious metals and stones.

The toilet boxes of this study were found in middle- and high-ranking burials of both women and men dating to the late Warring States period of



7.2. Sites with burials that include toilet boxes: a) Warring States period of the Zhou dynasty (fifth–third century BCE); b) Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE); c) Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). (Maps digitally redrawn from Hong 2006: fig. 3, page 10.)

the Eastern Zhou and throughout the Han dynasty (fourth century BCE–third century CE) (Figure 7.2). Their placement with the dead was part of the changes in burial content and structure and concurrent development in ideologies of an afterlife as described at the beginning of this chapter. Though items such as combs and hairpins had been placed with the dead as early as the Neolithic periods, and recognizable sets of toiletries have been found, for example, in the late Shang dynasty burial of Fu Hao (婦好) (Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Yuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1980) and in burials of the Western Zhou (西周) cemetery at Zhuyuangou (竹園沟) (Lu and Hu 1988), evidence thus far is not sufficient for the study of a widespread pattern or custom of placing sets of toiletries with the dead before the fourth century BCE.

The burials that contained preserved toilet boxes traverse many regions occupied by the late Zhou and Han empire, though since they were made from organic materials, they seldom survive intact. This is partly the reason why so little has been written about them. They are, however, well known as an object type thanks to the often-cited and remarkably preserved, double-leveled box found in tomb no. 1 at Mawangdui (馬王堆) Hunan (湖南), which contained nine boxes filled with combs, needles, a brush, cosmetic substances, and a powder puff, as well as silken and embroidered gloves, a belt, lengths of cloth, and an embroidered mirror sac (Hunan Sheng Bowuguan and Zhongguo Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1973: 88–9). Still, my research has identified more than 150 burials with identifiable traces of these lacquered containers which included tools for grooming and beautification sandwiched between. Considering the perishability of these object sets alongside the geographic scope of the burials in which toilet boxes have been found, as can be observed in Figure 7.2, it can be stated that by the Han dynasty, they were a relatively common item placed with the dead.

PERSONALIZING DIMENSIONS OF TOILET BOXES

There are few characteristics of toilet boxes that can be considered generalized. Regional traditions in craftsmanship are certainly observable; however, evidence gathered suggests that no two boxes are identical in size or décor. Even in burials from the same period and of similar size and content, boxes will differ markedly in their measurements and ornamentation, which suggests that in some cases, the boxes reflect the individual needs and aesthetic preferences of their owners. Some boxes even contain painted decorations or scenes inside the vessel, such as an example from Xiangyang Leigutai (咸陽擂鼓臺) Hubei (湖北), whose bottom interior includes groupings of figures and beasts in a discernable landscape (Xianyang Diqu Bowuguan 1979). While the presence of interior imagery is not unique to toilet boxes, it is nevertheless a feature that underscores the personalized nature of the boxes, since the imagery would have been seen almost exclusively by the owner.

It is the contents of the toilet boxes, however, that allow us to access individuals in the most compelling ways. To begin, by virtue of their practical functions and regular contact with their user, these items naturally developed a close connection to bodies. For instance, combs are run through the hair, brushes graze over the surface of the skin, hairpins remain secured within the hair for long periods of time, and powders may have been infused with fragrance for added sensory dimension. In addition, toiletries add definition to an individual's countenance, and are used to refine one's distinctive features; mirrors directly reflect the face. These items therefore have the capacity to evoke an individualized and intimate portrait of an individual. The fact that they were used on rather than simply associated with the body heightens the vividness of their connection: on the one hand, they had the ability to become personalized through routine use; on the other hand, they were not simply static correlates to the deceased, but instead conjured an individual active in daily routines. Those routines, moreover, were more likely to have been privately conducted rather than publicly observable, thus accentuating their proximity to individuals on a personal level. In his work on social memory as performed – that is, that the production and sustenance of memory is a process enacted through the body – Connerton has noted the capability of objects to accumulate and store information, which he refers to as “inscribing practices” (Connerton 1989: 73). It may be stated that toiletries and items of adornment came to be inscribed with the embodied use of individuals, and in turn, infused with their presence and memory when not in use.

While it is impossible to state with certainty that the toilet boxes of this study were those used in life by deceased individuals, there are clues that point to such a hypothesis. For one, there is evidence that some of the items were used previous to their placement in burial.² The hairs of a brush found in the

toiletry case in tomb no. 1 at Mawangdui preserved a dusting of red powder, possibly from rouge (Hunan Sheng Bowuguan and Zhongguo Kexue Yuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1973: 1.129). In another instance, a case found in the Eastern Han tomb of Wang Xu (王盱) and his wives included a thin wooden stick with a bit of black ink at the tip. The excavators of this tomb believe that this item had been used for blackening the eyebrows (Harada and Tazawa 1930: 37). Such signs of wear conjure the “embodied use” described above, thus linking them to individuals. Hallam and Hockey have discussed how subject/object boundaries become destabilized through consistent interaction. The mnemonic capacity of certain objects is reinforced when this occurs: material objects become extensions of the body and, in turn, of the personhood of the subject (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 14, 42–3). In other words, these manifestations of the intimate relationship between object and person, if visible during the funerary ceremonies, may have impressed upon viewers (especially those who had a close relationship to the deceased) visual or even sensory memories of the deceased.

What is more, within these boxes a strong sense of personalized curation is evident through the inclusion of trinkets unrelated to practices of beautification. While many cases contained a standard set of implements, including mirrors, comb sets, and cosmetic powders, some well-preserved sets reveal a host of other interesting and curious items that have no apparent role in beautification routines. The presence of such items suggests that toilet boxes served as both containers for toiletries and as storage for personal keepsakes or other small, loose items deemed important to their owner. A box found in Western Han (西漢) tomb no. 1 at Dafentou (大坟頭) (Hubei) included a jade *bi* (碧) disc, an object contemporary to the Han period, but also one imbued with profound symbolic and historical significance (Hubei Sheng Bowuguan 1981). As discussed by many scholars, when placed upon or about the body in death, jade may have held a variety of symbolic meanings (Rawson 1995; Wu 1997). Enclosed in a box along with relatively mundane items, however, the disc may have been of personal value or significance to the deceased during life, or treasured and appreciated for its ancient origins.

Other instances of non-toiletry items suggest different personal or even professional interests. A box found in the male coffin of a joint burial at Sanfengou (三汾沟), Hebei (河北) contained a bronze mirror, brush handle, and wooden comb set, but also various small objects, such as a wooden pig and animal-headed knobs (Hebei Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo and Zhangjiakou Diqu Wenwu Ju 1990). A rectangular box from tomb no. 106 at Rizhao (Shandong) contained twenty-three wooden spacers, or bridges (*xian zhu* 弦柱), for a *qin* (琴) stringed instrument (Shandong Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2010: 24). A toiletry case of a Western Han official buried at Fenghuangshan (鳳凰山) (Hubei), noted above, contained a collection of bamboo items, including slips,

a thin tube, and a shovel-shaped object (Hubei Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1993: 455–513). These may be related to the various scholars’ tools found elsewhere in his tomb, including implements for writing, an ink slab, and other bamboo slips. Other cases contain items that are as yet unidentifiable, such as egg, semi-sphere, and tube forms in stone found alongside finger rings, iron pincers, and a mirror in a large, rectangular box in Changsha (長沙) (Hunan) (Hunan Sheng Bowuguan 1966: 1818). While the purpose or use of these latter items remains unclear, they, along with other non-toiletry items mentioned above, may have provided mourners familiar with the tastes and character of the dead with a more personalized visual link to the departed.

All of these features of toilet boxes would have encouraged mourners to recall specific details about deceased individuals, which may have facilitated what Williams called “memorable sensory engagements” between the living and the dead. In the midst of the funerary ceremonies, toiletries that had been used in life were charged with the residual personhood of the deceased. Each toilet box thus accrued meaning in the context of death for its capacity to conjure individuals in a highly personalized way.

TOILET BOXES IN FUNERARY CONTEXT

How then, were toilet boxes mobilized within the strategies of commemoration that made up funerary ceremonies? As has been indicated above through the discussion of the use of lamps and gifted garments, there is evidence for a relatively detailed picture of how death rituals unfolded for contexts that fall under the period range of this study. Indeed, well-preserved and meticulously constructed burial contexts have been examined alongside the rich documentary record that includes highly codified ritual dictates concerning the preparation of the dead and spatio-temporal progression of the funeral. Among the most often cited of these texts are the *Yi Li* (Protocols of Ceremonies) and the *Li Ji* (Book of Rites), which originate from the Central Plain region and were compiled during the Han period. Using information from these texts, in what follows I will discuss the various stages of the funerals during which the mnemonic dimensions of toilet boxes may have been pronounced. As will be demonstrated, different patterns of placement of toilet boxes point to variable life histories after their transition to contexts of death. Thus, in addition to new significances accrued during funerals, we can also appreciate the nuances of their impact on the mourning body, depending on where mourners chose to place toilet sets.

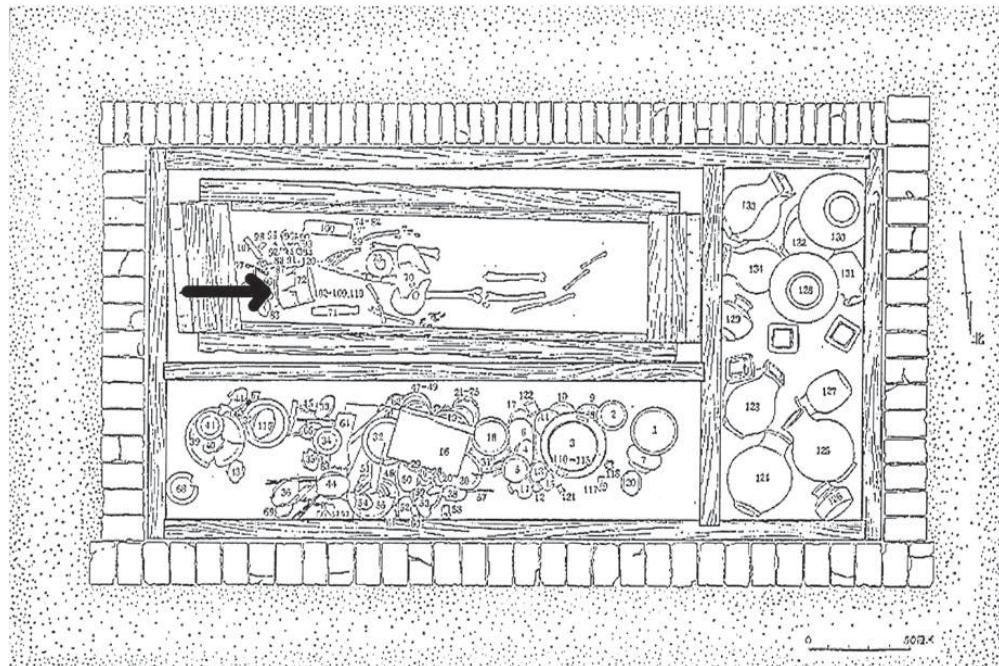
In structure, the burials of this study comprise coffins and outer encasements, or *guan-guo* (棺椁) configurations (most of the dataset are in the form of vertical pit burials, though some are horizontally oriented multi-chambered brick or stone tombs). Along with deceased bodies, coffins often contain a small

selection of burial goods, while the main corpus of items was usually placed within the outer encasement. These nested arrangements of coffin and outer compartments suggest two possible events: preparation of the corpse and its placement in the coffin, and the final interment of this unit within the larger burial structure/space. These two events, moreover, may have taken place at different times and/or places. This is supported by a relief carving on the side of a stone sarcophagus from a late Middle Han period tomb in Weishan (微山) (Shandong 山東) (Wang et al. 1989; Ma 2003: 244–5). The composition of this carving is divided into three registers, each of which narrates an event of the funerary sequence. As discussed by Wu, the far left scene may picture the bestowal of gifts before the burial. The central scene shows mourners accompanying a large hearse, presumably in procession to the grave site. Small figures in front pull the hearse forward, while those in its wake, depicted as larger in size, were likely family members of the deceased. The final scene is centered on a large open grave in the shape of a rectangle, surrounded by standing and seated mourners, some of whom are drinking from wine cups; three large tumuli and trees are pictured in the background (Wu 1998b). Texts corroborate and provide meticulous detail of this sequence. For the aims of this chapter, I will only provide broad strokes of the process (more thorough accounts can be found in Wu 1992, 1998; Lai 2002; Wang 2011).

Rituals as described in the *Yi Li* and the *Li Ji* began at the household of the deceased, where death was declared and the corpse was first prepared in the so-called Lesser Dressing, during which it was washed and dressed, followed by the Greater Dressing, when it was wrapped in further garments and placed in the coffin (*Yili zhushu* 36.800, see Yang 2004). In the second part of the funeral, the coffin was processed to a predetermined burial site and, finally, installed within the outer encasement.

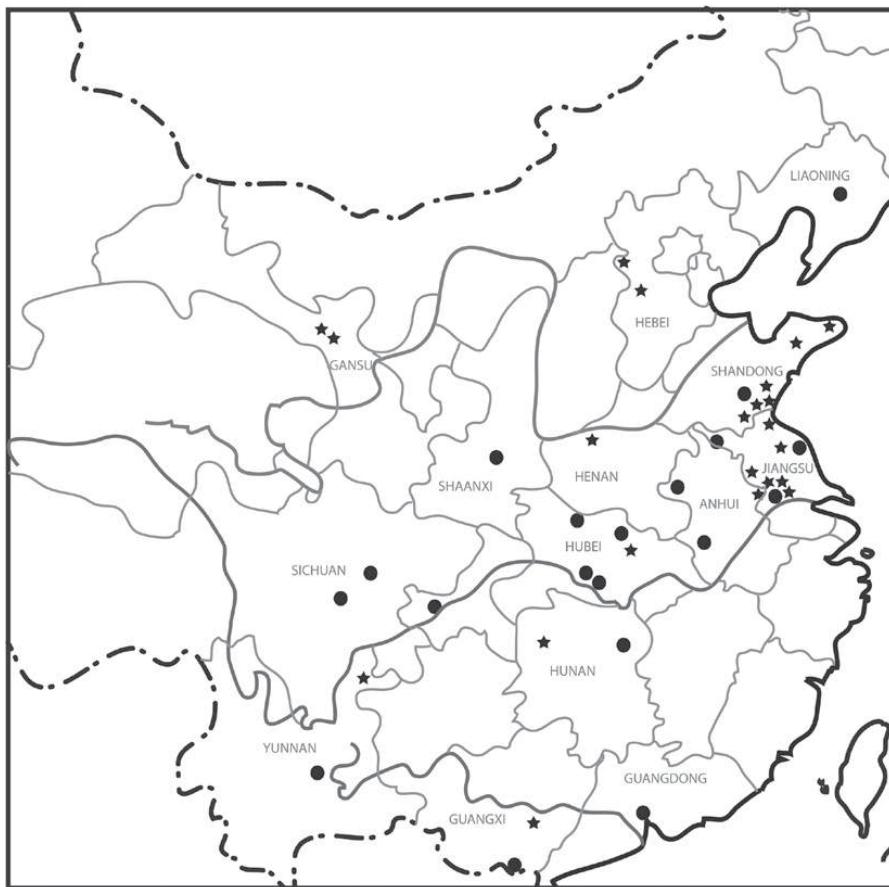
Discussion of these two phases is important because, as has been noted, toilet boxes have been found in both the outer encasement and along with the corpse in the inner coffin (Figure 7.3). The map in Figure 7.4 indicates the locations of burials with toilet boxes in the outer encasement versus those found within the inner coffin across the historical periods of this study. In terms of the regional distribution of these burials, there is as yet no observable pattern for these different placements. As for chronology, in the earliest burials, which fall within the late Warring States period of the Zhou dynasty, toilet boxes were placed in the surrounding compartments of the outer encasement. Beginning in the Qin (秦) and throughout the Han dynasties, in some instances, toilet boxes were placed in the inner coffin; in all others, they continued to be placed in the surrounding compartments.

I follow chronology of placement here in analyzing the impact of toilet boxes during the funerary ceremonies. Thus, I begin by treating those placed in compartments surrounding the inner coffin, which is reflected consistently



7.3. Layout of tomb no. 1 at Laixi (Shandong), with arrow indicating a toilet box at the head of the deceased within the inner coffin. Late Western Han dynasty. (From Yantai Diqu Wenwu Guanli zu and Laixi Xian Wenwu Guan 1980: fig. 4, p. 8.)

from the late Zhou and through the Han dynasties. Placement of toilet boxes in this location indicates that they were incorporated into the second phase of the funerary rituals, when the already encoffined corpse and accompanying grave goods were processed to the final burial site. Texts note different junctures when grave goods were arranged in rows and placed on display. One such occasion was at the lineage temple, a stop made en route to the final grave site. It was here that both the coffin and accompanying objects were presented before the ancestors (*Yili zhushu* 39.864–74, see Yang 2004). Again, pictorial evidence corroborates this opportunity for display. Scenes carved along the lintels of the front chamber of an underground stone slab tomb of the Eastern Han at Yi’nan (沂南) (Shandong) offer a rare and relatively detailed glimpse of particular moments during the funerary sequence. In one scene, robed figures in official caps bow before the temple. They are surrounded by items laid out and displayed on either side of the building, including wine vessels, sacks of grain, and a number of boxes, which may have held items such as food and other provisions (Thompson 1998: 194). Ornate, rounded containers that closely resemble toilet boxes are arranged among these items. Thus, the second phase of the rituals incorporated specific moments of pause, when scenes were composed that visually presented the progress of the deceased’s transition. During these moments, when the body was already concealed within



7.4. Han dynasty burial sites that include toilet boxes. Dots indicate sites where toilet boxes have been found outside of the inner coffin; stars indicate sites where toiletries have been found inside the inner coffin. (Map digitally redrawn from Hong 2006: fig. 3, page 10.)

the coffin, highly personalized items like toiletries may have facilitated the selective remembering and forgetting of the dead, forging an idealized image in the memories of the living.

Alternatively, toilet boxes that were found in the inner coffin alongside the deceased played a role in rituals forming the first part of the ceremonies, which focused attention on the preparation of the corpse and its placement within the coffin. This custom is first observable during the Qin and throughout the Han. Well-preserved bodies with intact clothing and other adornments attest to the careful attention that was given to deceased individuals during this initial phase of the rites (see, for example, Hunan Sheng Bowuguan and Zhongguo Kexue Yuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1973 and Hubei Sheng Jingzhou Diqu Bowuguan 1985). Williams reminds us that treatment of the body influences the way that funerals are experienced by the living as occasions for effecting transition and commemoration (Williams 2006: 81). Specifically, rituals of cleansing, clothing,

positioning, and ornamenting the corpse, as well as the items placed in its close proximity, all affect both the body of the deceased *and* the living community participating in the rites. Thus, when we consider treatment of the corpse in death, we must be mindful that such acts were designed by and had an impact on the living. Moreover, both the *Yi Li* and the *Li Ji* indicate that this first phase took place during the first few days after death was declared, when its immediacy may have been particularly palpable for the living. Initial rites on the body were to be carried out in a small room, with the closest relations present (*Yili zhushu* 35.765–6, see Yang 2004; *Liji zhengyi* 44.1445–6).

As described by Beckman, the wrapping of the corpse during the Greater Dressing was a ceremonial and potentially emotional event whereby mourners had the opportunity to personally contribute to the preparation of the deceased body. Moreover, in this process, they would have witnessed the gradual concealment of the individual as the body became obscured beneath a cocoon of layered garments. Placing items of a personal nature in the coffin with the wrapped body would have provided the living with opportunities to continue to engage with the dead in these final moments. For instance, in some coffins, wooden tablets have been found that convey wishes to the dead. One such message was found along with a pile of coins in the western coffin of a double-occupant tomb at Xuchi (盱眙) (no. 7, Jiangsu). Peppered with terms of respect, a deceased mother and father are presented to the spirit world with hopes that they will receive good fortune in the afterlife (Nanjing Bowuguan 1979). These last acts of respect between children and parents, just before the coffin lid was permanently closed, were plausibly occasions for heightened emotions of grief and mourning.

The placement of toiletry items in the coffin may have also figured in this way. During these emotionally charged moments, consignment of such intimate belongings – veritable extensions of that individual – may have granted living descendants agency in allowing the notion of death to proceed. Like the garments and written tracts, the deployment of toiletries in the first phase of the rites reinforced the reality of death and also presented a means by which the living could begin to part with those lost.

To add one final note addressing the fact that toilet boxes do, in fact, enclose and therefore conceal their contents, it is indeed unclear whether the boxes were opened during occasions of display. There is, however, evidence that, at least in some cases, items were individually announced to funerary audiences. Some burials include inventories of grave goods recorded on bamboo slips. Toilet boxes are recorded, and there are some lists that include a selection of their contents as well. For example, in tomb no. 3 at Mawangdui, two smaller rounded boxes that were enclosed within one of the toilet boxes of the male occupant were tallied as “two round baskets containing lavender oil 員(圓)付簍二盛蘭膏” (strip 264). Additionally, three other boxes were

listed as “three small baskets, containing rouge, one with combs 小付箋三盛脂其一盛節(栉)” (strip 263) (Hunan Sheng Bowuguan and Henan Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2004: 149–52). This was also the case for tomb no. 1 at the same site (Hunan Sheng Bowuguan and Zhongguo Kexue Yuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1973: 72, 89, 120, 129). According to the *Yi Li*, on the occasion when the burial goods were laid out and displayed at the lineage temple, they were also tallied on wooden tablets by object type and donor. This list of grave goods was then read aloud the next morning before an audience of both mourners and ancestors (*Yili zhushu* 39.864–74, see Yang 2004).

The fact that toilet boxes were part of the second phase of the funerary rites throughout the period of study indicates that they were considered important to presenting an enduring and embodied image of the deceased while simultaneously contributing to a new and idealized memory of that individual for the larger mourning body. In these instances, they operated as part of a larger corpus of everyday items that may have been recognized for their personal links to individuals. However, the significant number of contexts, beginning in the Qin and continuing throughout the Han, in which toilet boxes were set apart from the majority of burial goods and included alongside the corpse in the inner coffin, suggests that early on they were acknowledged for their highly intimate relationship to the dead, closely connected to the material body and personal identity of the deceased. In both cases, they would have figured in the succession of “memorable sensory engagements” between the living and the dead, though when placed in the coffin, their life history changed more acutely as they became items charged with the potential to elicit grief.

CONCLUSION

Objects of daily use were placed with the dead in Warring States through Han dynasty burials in order to facilitate the notion of an afterlife modeled on the realm of the living. This chapter has proposed that the biographies and life histories of such items were not as straightforward as may be assumed. Instead of focusing on their multiple meanings with relation to the corpse and posthumous soul as reflected in the final and static burial tableau, it is proposed here that we can appreciate these items in new ways by considering their impact on the living during the funerary rituals, which provided visual progress of the transition of the dead and served as a setting for the construction of personal and social memories of the deceased. It has been argued that while all objects of daily use, due to their close association to deceased individuals, had the potential to elicit remembrance and even feelings of grief, toilet boxes and their contents were distinguished for their particularly intimate connection to the body, and their capacity to evoke personal biographies.

To bring this chapter to a close, I present an anecdote from the *Hou Hanshu* (後漢書), or the *Book of the Later Han*, compiled by Fan Ye (范曄) around the fifth century CE. Here, toiletries figure as highly potent objects of memory, but their impact is felt long after death, since in this case, a box was kept above ground to serve both the living and the dead:

明帝性孝愛，追慕無已。十七年正月，當謁原陵，夜夢先帝、太后如平生歡。既寤，悲不能寐，即案曆，明旦日吉，遂率百官及故客上陵。其日，降甘露於陵樹，帝令百官採取以薦。會畢，帝從席前伏禦床，視太后鏡盒中物，感動悲涕，令易脂澤裝具。左右皆泣，莫能仰視焉。

Emperor Ming's nature was filial love, and he longed for [his deceased parents] endlessly. It was the first month of the seventeenth year of his reign [74 CE], and therefore customary that he visit the tomb mound [of his parents]. The night before, he dreamt of [them,] the former emperor and empress, and their happiness when alive. When he awoke, he was grieved to the extent that he could no longer sleep. He checked the calendar, [noticed that] the next dawn marked an auspicious day, and was therefore satisfied to lead officials and important guests to visit the tomb mounds. At that time of day, sweet dew was falling [from heaven] onto the tomb mound's trees and the emperor decreed that his guests collect it and offer it to his parents. [When they] assembled [after] the conclusion [of these rituals, at the mausoleum], the emperor, [seated on the] mat, fell forward onto the [spirit] bed. He looked at the objects inside the empress's toiletry case and was moved to tears. He ordered the cosmetic substances inside to be changed. Those all around wept, and could not bear to watch.³

While this passage is likely sheer rhetoric, extolling the filial piety of a model emperor, it nevertheless presents toiletries as material extensions of a deceased individual. Upon completion of the formal rituals of visiting the grave and providing the appropriate offerings, Emperor Ming came in contact with the toiletry case of his mother, which had been set out as part of the posthumous vigil to appease the bodies of the deceased imperial couple. In the text just before this passage, we learn that the empress died in the seventh year of Emperor Ming's 明 reign, or 62 CE. His recorded visit to the gravesite took place in his seventeenth year as regent, or 74 CE, some twelve years after her passing. It is likely that he had begun to forget certain aspects of his mother, which is perhaps why her toiletry items, inscribed with her embodied image, had such an agonizing affect. Hallam and Hockey have written that "vestiges of the past acquire resonance through their relation to something forgotten" (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 104–5). The more distant to memory the image of his mother, the more evocative such items as cosmetic powders and brushes became with regard to both the visual and sensual dimensions of recollection. Even the ritual texts recognized the

“new value of old things” in the context of death. The *Li ji*’s chapter, “Yu Zao (玉藻),” states of a filial son: “When his father died, he could not [bear to] read his books – the touch of his hand seemed still to be on them. When his mother died, he could not [bear to] drink from cups and bowls that she had used – the breath of her mouth seem still to be on them” (*Liji zhengyi* 30.1075). Such material vestiges of a loved one would have made palpable his or her absence. One might gather from the passage that Emperor Ming found both anguish and comfort in handling his mother’s toiletry items. In the end, we read that he ordered that the cosmetic powders inside be refilled, a testament to the potency of toiletries in reviving, renewing, and sustaining memories.

NOTES

- 1 In an article titled “Death, Travel, and Otherworldly Journey in Early China, as Seen through Tomb Texts, Travel Paraphernalia, and Road Rituals,” and in his recent book, *Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion*, Lai also argues that in some cases personal items were intended for use in the posthumous journey of the soul. See Lai (2005, 2015).
- 2 It is possible that these items were also used in preparing the corpse for burial, though there is no evidence to confirm that cosmetics were employed as part of these rites.
- 3 *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, by Fan Ye 范曄 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965), 10a.407 (“Huang Hou Ji 皇后紀”). Author’s translation.

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EIGHT

A BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE MOUNTED ARCHER MOTIF DURING THE HAN DYNASTY

Leslie V. Wallace

During the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) mounted archers hunting prey decorated different media in burial contexts across China. The most famous example of Western Han (206 BCE–9 CE) imagery appears on an inlaid bronze chariot ornament on which a mounted archer, dressed in billowy pants and wearing a rounded high top hat, turns backward in his saddle posed in the so-called “Parthian shot,” and takes aim at a roaring tiger. Both the hunted and hunter are surrounded by a swirling vine-like landscape filled with exotic animals and the mounted archer is marked as being foreign through his environment and distinctive dress ([Figure 8.1](#)). Instances of exoticized early Western Han mounted archers are few, but by the end of the first century BCE, mounted archers dressed in Han or foreign clothing appear throughout the Han Empire in hunting scenes decorating lacquerware, ceramic vessels, and tomb bricks. By the end of the first century CE, however, the geographic and material pervasiveness of this imagery changes and mounted archers are found primarily only on the lintels of Eastern Han (25–220 CE) stone tombs doors in Shanbei (陝北) (northern Shaanxi; [Figures 8.2](#) and [8.3](#)).

In the following analysis I will apply a modified form of the object biography approach by tracing the “lineage” of the figure of the mounted archer from its earliest appearance during the short-lived Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), through its spread across various media in different mortuary contexts during the Western Han, and ultimately its comparative restriction in the second century CE to one medium, stone tomb reliefs, almost exclusively in

one geographic area, Shanbei (see map, [Figure 8.4](#)). As I will argue, by this time the once popular figure of the mounted archer had become a pariah to patrons of stone reliefs in other regions of the Han Empire. In Shanbei it served as an important political and cultural marker for the patrons of these reliefs who were increasingly marginalized within the Han political system.



8.1. Artist's rendering of a panel from an inlaid bronze chariot ornament from Sanpanshan, Hebei. Western Han dynasty, ca. 90 BCE. (After Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo chutu wenwu zhanlan zhanpin xuanji 1973: 85.)

METHODOLOGY

The object biography approach, first proposed by Igor Kopytoff (1986), posits that it is possible to trace the life history of an object, asking the same questions one would about the life of an individual. The answers to these questions and an overview of the biography of an object or a group of objects, from the circumstances in which they are first produced to their eventual abandonment, can be used to highlight the multiple functions objects acquire and create through social interaction and latent features of the individuals and cultures that adopted and used them. Anthropologists have used this approach to study objects in contemporary cultures (Hoskins 1998; Mackenzie 1998) and the seminal volume of *World Archaeology*, “The Cultural Biography of Objects,”



8.2. Detail of a hunting scene decorating the tomb lintel of Dabaodang (大保當) Tomb M23, Shenmu (神木), Shaanxi. Eastern Han dynasty. (After Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiu suo and Yulin Shi wenwu guanli weiyuan hui bangongshi 2001: Color Plate 19.1.)



8.3. Lintel depicting hunters with real and mythical animals. The border of the door is a variation of the *yunqi* pattern. Hejiagou (賀家溝), Qingjian (清澗), Shaanxi. Eastern Han dynasty. (After Li et al. 1995: 216. Illustration by Scott Mann.)



8.4. Map showing sites mentioned in the text. (After Alan Mak, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_blank_map-2.png, published under Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Generic license. Map by Scott Mann.)

edited by Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall (1999), provided archaeological templates for object biographies. The themes prevalent in this volume have also been explored by later scholars and include how both natural and man-made portable and fixed objects and imagery are transformed by systems of

exchange (Gallardo et al. 1999; Fontjin 2002; Hamilakis 1999; Papadopoulos and Smith 2002; Peers 1999; Saunders 1999; Seip 1999), performance (Gosden and Marshall 1999; Joy 2009), and reuse (Bo et al. 2009; Gillings/Pollard 1999, MacGregor 1999; Moreland 1999; Swift 2012). Often these objects are currently held in archaeological and anthropological museums and were sometimes collected or exchanged within a colonial context (Gorogianni 2011; Gosden and Knowles 2001; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Peers 1999; Seip 1999). More recently, Jody Joy (2009) has modified the basic object biography approach to prehistoric objects by creating non-linear biographies focused on moments when objects become “alive” in certain clusters of social relationships. Others have adapted the object biography approach to analyze much larger entities, including museums (Alberti 2005) and cities (Arnold 1999).

Overall most of these approaches focus on tracing the trajectory of a single object or discrete geographical and/or chronological groups of objects and the new functions and meanings that become attached to them across space and/or time. Rather than focus on an object or assemblage of objects, similar to Gallardo et al. (1999), I will look at a specific iconographic element, in my case, the figure of the mounted archer during the Han dynasty, and like Hoffman (2001), I will consider the changing nature of imagery as it jumps between static and portable objects. Although this study will sketch minor iconographical changes in the depiction of mounted archers, the following analysis is more concerned with examining the changing context in which the figure appears in order to construct an “image lineage.” In the introduction to this volume, the editors distinguish between the construction of “object biographies,” what happens to a single object over time, and “object lineages,” what happens to a class or type of objects over time usually as the result of copying, reproduction, and modification. In what follows, I will apply their concept of an “object lineage” to an image – the figure of the mounted archer – sketching its trajectory during the Han dynasty. My study also differs from earlier object biographies in the trajectory of the development and spread of the motif. Rather than being replicated and modified across an expanding geographic area during the Han dynasty, the figure of the mounted archer instead becomes restricted in terms of both geography and the medium that it embellishes.

When creating a traditional object biography or, in the case of this chapter, an image lineage, one prefers exact object counts and geographic distribution lists. In this study the accuracy of both is complicated by the following factors. First and foremost is the perennial problem of selective site preservation and excavation. This is further compounded by the fragile nature of the types of object outlined below, especially lacquerware, which is better preserved in the humid climate of south central China. In addition, many of the ceramic *hu* (壺) and hill jars, which have become objects d’art in museums in Europe and North America, lack provenance and remain relatively understudied, and

for both lacquerware and ceramic vessels, there are few photographs or line drawings that show the decoration of the entire vessel. In addition, the sheer number of Eastern Han tomb reliefs is staggering and there is no definitive compilation of excavated reliefs, making exact numbers and percentages extremely difficult to compile. On a positive note, in the case of Eastern Han tomb reliefs from Shanbei, where the relative number of sites and publication materials is limited, it is possible to arrive at a good estimate of the number of excavated reliefs depicting mounted archers. Although the above challenges exist, there is sufficient data to construct the spatial, temporal, and socio-political patterns of the image lineage of the mounted archer during the Han dynasty outlined below.

QIN AND HAN MOUNTED ARCHERS

Although during the late first and early second century CE the figure of the mounted archer would be used extensively on carved stone tombs doors in Shanbei, the figure first appears in the late third century BCE and spreads across different material and geographic regions. In the following I will provide an overview of the visual and geographic permutations of the figure of the mounted archer from the third century BCE through the second century CE, roughly dividing the material into three phases.

Phase 1 (ca. 221–ca. 100 BCE)

The appearance of the mounted archer in Phase 1 is situated within the larger political context of the foundation of empires, beginning with the short-lived but pivotal Qin, whose expansion northward brought conflict with the nascent Xiongnu (匈奴), a political confederation of nomadic pastoralists who by the early second century BCE dominated the eastern Steppe. The Xiongnu quickly gained the upper hand over the emerging Han dynasty, formed after the collapse of the Qin, and would continue to remain their main rival into the first century CE.

Mounted archers first appear in the archaeological record in the third century BCE, hunting deer in an undulating landscape on a Qin dynasty brick (Li 1998: Figure 22) and on a fragment of a mural from the ruins of Palace No. 3 at the Qin capital of Xianyang (咸陽) (Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiu suo 2004: Image 12.1). The mural is poorly preserved, but on the tomb brick we find mounted archers wearing billowy pants and round high top hats, arranged in two registers, hunting deer depicted fleeing in a flying gallop. The mounted archers on the brick face forward, riding their horses across a hilly landscape suggested by an undulating line. The near mirror-like composition found on both registers suggests that the depiction was created using stamps. This imagery

provides the baseline for later Han mounted archers, which are often depicted on objects arranged in registers hunting in a mountainous/cloud-like landscape suggested by a swirling line(s). Later mounted archers also wear billowy pants and round high top or pointed hats, clothing that is associated with foreigners in Han mortuary art (Xing 2000; Zheng 1998), or square rounded hats or topknots that are more typical of Han dress. A similar hunting scene with mounted archers appears on the lower register of a stamped Qin brick from Lintong (临潼), Xi'an, Shaanxi and another in the C. T. Loo collection. The register above the hunting scene depicts animals in a mountainous landscape (Jacobson 1985).

It is not until the Western Han that we find the mounted archer posed in the so-called Parthian shot, in which the archer is turned backward in his saddle, shooting at a target to his rear. The earliest example of archers turned backward in their saddle appears on second-century BCE mirrors painted with oil-based mineral pigments on a white plaster-like ground (Liu 2005: 382). Two pairs of mounted archers, one of each posed executing the Parthian shot, are depicted on the outer rim of one of these mirrors against a vermillion background. One group is hunting a wild boar and there is a slight suggestion of landscape with the depiction of small trees/bushes. The area where the other pair of hunter's prey would have been painted is damaged. Separating the two pairs of mounted archers are quatrefoil medallions and groups of figures engaging in different elite activities (Liu et al. 2005: Catalog 39). A similar, but more damaged painted mirror excavated in Xi'an has a chariot hunt replacing the second pair of mounted archers (*Zhongguo qingtong qi*, Vol. 16, No. 44).

As these materials show, in Phase 1 the figure of the mounted archer is geographically limited to the area of the Qin and Han capitals and includes a palace mural, tomb bricks, and painted bronze mirrors whose original context is unclear. Although the small number of existing examples in Phase 1 complicates generalizations, at this time the basic iconographic parameters of later mounted archer imagery is established: mounted archer in Han or foreign dress turned backward or sitting forward in the saddle with or without elements that suggest a mountainous landscape. The overarching historical and political context suggests a connection between the figure of the mounted archer, the Qin and Han courts, and the Xiongnu.

Phase 2 (ca. 100 BCE–50 CE)

Phase 2 follows a period of aggressive Han expansion and expensive, but successful, military campaigns against the Xiongnu. Although during the first century BCE many began to question the Han imperial agenda, during this period the figure of the mounted archer can be found decorating different types of media across a large geographic area. This pattern begins to fade

during the Wang Mang Interregnum (9–23 CE) and with the founding of the Eastern Han in the early first century CE.

About fifty years after the production of the Western Han painted bronze mirror noted above, the figure of the mounted archer reappears as the one of the main decorative motifs on five bronze chariot ornaments, one of which was excavated from a tomb in Sanpanshan (三盤山), Dingxian, Hebei (ca. 90 BCE) (Wang 2005; Wu 1984) (see map, [Figure 8.4](#)). Called *bini* (俾倪) in Han texts, these objects were placed between the two joints of a chariot canopy shaft for reinforcement. Of the five *bini* decorated with the figure of the mounted archer, four are decorated with inlay; the fifth has figures and patterns in raised relief on a striated background (Wang 2005: 341–2). On *bini* the decoration is divided into four registers, with the figure of a mounted archer dressed in billowy pants and a round high top hat hunting amid a swirling mountainous/vine-like landscape as the focus of one of the four registers ([Figure 8.1](#)). On *bini*, the mounted archer is often joined by other exotic figures, which include foreigners sitting on top of an elephant, a camel, and a phoenix.

Other late Western Han and early Eastern Han mounted archers appear on lacquer toiletry cases (*lian* 盒) and ceramic *hu* (壺), hill jars, and tomb bricks. Mounted archers decorating toiletry cases are depicted with animals and immortals on a swirling cloud-patterned background (*yunqi*, 云氣), similar to the decorative background of earlier chariot ornaments. In an example excavated from Yangzhou, Jiangsu (see map, [Figure 8.4](#)), the imagery is arranged in two registers with the mounted archer wearing billowy pants and a rounded hat, joined by other figures, some of which, like a crane and *xian* (仙) (immortal), relate to beliefs in immortality (Li et al. 2004: Figure 88). Most of the preserved lacquer toiletry cases come from elite tombs in south central China, but this is most likely due to preservation rather than limited geographical use (Lullo 2009). Those decorated with the figure of the mounted archer have been excavated near Huai'an (淮安) (Liu et al. 2007: Figures 36 and 39) and Yangzhou (揚州), Jiangsu (Li et al. 2004: Figures 88, 90, and 91) (see map, [Figure 8.4](#)), suggesting that the motif was popular in this area. An isolated example of a lacquer face mask excavated from the Yangzhou area, which includes a mounted archer, hybrid animals, and *xian*, may also attest to the wider popularity of imagery on lacquer pieces that have not survived (Li et al. 2004: Figure 93).

Similar imagery appears on amber and green lead-glazed ceramic *hu* and hill jars (*zun* 尊) where the mounted archer appears in a mountainous landscape chasing real and fantastic animals around the belly of the vessel. These *hu* were produced throughout the Han Empire, although their exact distribution is complicated by the unprovenanced nature of vessels in European and North American collections and lack of scholarship on both types of vessels. In addition, none of these vessels can be securely dated, but the lead glaze used to

make *hu* and hill jars was popular from roughly the early first century BCE to the late first century CE (Li 2010: 145). Many of the mounted archers on ceramic *hu* and hill jars wear pointed caps and are posed in the Parthian shot, taking aim at deer depicted in a flying gallop, gliding over swirling and entangled lines that form a landscape suggestive of swirling clouds and triangular mountains. These mountains separate the archer from the other images depicted on the vessel. Similar designs were also painted on ceramic *hu*, including one example from Luoyang on which a mounted archer turns backward in his saddle and takes aim at a fantastic two-horned anthropomorphic monster amid a spinning cloudscape (Liu 1991: 107).

First-century BCE and first-century CE tomb bricks, excavated from areas around Luoyang and Zhengzhou, Henan (see map, Figure 8.4), provide the most geographically concentrated use of the figure of the mounted archer prior to Eastern Han tomb reliefs in Shanbei. Made by using stamps, nearly identical imagery appears multiple times on a single brick. Sometimes stamps were used to create a textile-like effect, such as on a brick from Luoyang, which is decorated with a pattern that includes mounted archers shooting phoenixes and anthropomorphic figures (*Zhongguo huaxiang zhuan quanji*, vol. 2: Figure 16), or include imagery similar to that found on *hu* or hill jars, with mounted archers chasing prey in mountainous landscapes (*Zhongguo huaxiang zhuan quanji*, vol. 2: Figure 24). But more often a single mounted archer, posed in the Parthian shot, is stamped multiple times on a brick alongside other scenes that have also been stamped several times, such as two figures in a chariot, a scene of animal–human combat, musicians, or dancers (*Zhongguo huaxiang zhuan quanji*, vol. 2: Figure 39). Mounted archers decorating tomb bricks from the Zhengzhou and Luoyang area do not wear the distinctive rounded high-topped or pointed hats worn by earlier mounted archers and instead don square caps or wear their hair in topknots, headgear and hairstyles common to the interior of the Han Empire.

Based on the examples outlined above, in Phase 2 the iconography of the mounted archer remains fairly stable, with figures continuing to wear Han or foreign dress and hunting in a mountainous or cloudlike landscape, but the geographic spread of the imagery and the material that it decorates expands. During Phase 2, materials decorated with the mounted archer have been found across north, central, and south central China and include chariot ornaments, lacquerware, ceramic *hu* and hill jars, and tomb bricks. Overall, the imagery of the mounted archer in Phase 2 appears to trickle down from more elite objects, such as bronze chariot ornaments and lacquerware, to mass-produced ceramics and bricks, all of which have been recovered from a mortuary context. During the turbulent early years of the first century CE and amid renewed conflicts with the Xiongnu, however, the figure of the mounted archer appears

less and less on burial goods. As will be discussed in more detail below, such imagery suggests a continued connection between the figure of the mounted archer, the Xiongnu Empire, and Han imperial expansion.

Phase 3 (ca. 50–175 CE)

Phase 3 follows the decisive defeat of the Xiongnu by Eastern Han forces in 50 CE, the forced immigration of the Southern Xiongnu court to Shanbei, and the concomitant Han resettlement of this region of the Han northern frontier. These events form the background for the resurgence of the figure of the mounted archer, albeit in one specific geographic area – northern Shaanxi, northwestern Shanxi, and south central Inner Mongolia, and on two related media, tomb reliefs and tomb murals.

Most of these materials are concentrated in Shanbei, where mounted archers appear in hunting scenes decorating the lintels of carved stone tomb doors of mid- to low-level officials and local elite. After the political situation in Shanbei collapsed in the 140s, it appears many of these patrons and artisans fled east to Lishi (离石), Shanxi, where tombs decorated with similar carved reliefs continued to be constructed. I also include in these materials several Eastern Han tomb murals excavated in Shanbei and south central Inner Mongolia, as these murals use similar imagery and are from the larger region in which the patrons of the tomb reliefs lived. Tomb murals with mounted archers in the region have been excavated from Haotan (郝滩) and Yulin (榆林), Shaanxi (Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiu yuan 2009) and Milanhao (米兰壕) Mi, Etoukeqi (鄂托克旗), Inner Mongolia (Yang 2010). Based on existing tomb inscriptions and historical texts, reliefs and murals from this region can be dated from roughly 90 to 175 CE.

Exceptions to this general trend do exist, but their numbers are few. Mounted archers appear in both the Han and non-Han forces in Sino-Barbarian battle scenes (胡漢交戰圖/胡漢戰爭圖 *Hu Han jiaozheng tu/Hu Han zhanzheng tu*) such as the one depicted on the west wall of the Xiaotang shan (孝堂山) shrine in Shandong (*Zhongguo huaxiang shi quanji* 1: Figure 43), and in isolated examples of hunting scenes from Shandong, Henan, and Sichuan. The total number of examples in which the mounted archer appears outside of Shanbei and its environs, however, is relatively low when compared to the seventy-nine times mounted archers appear in tomb reliefs and murals excavated from northern Shaanxi, Shanxi, and south central Inner Mongolia.

In Shanbei, the figure of the mounted archer is based on earlier Qin and Han representations and appears on the lintels of tomb doorways hunting tigers, deer, wolves, bears, foxes, and other animals. The inspiration of imagery that appears on earlier inlaid chariot ornaments, lacquerware, ceramic vessels, and tomb bricks can be seen in the frequency with which tigers are

depicted as prey and the recurrent pairing of mounted archers with mythical hybrids and immortality motifs (Figures 8.2 and 8.3). The Western Han *yunqi* (运气) pattern also reemerges as a swirling cloudscape or in the border framing hunting scenes in Shanbei. One of the few differences with earlier imagery is that most of the mounted archers depicted in the region do not wear round high-topped or pointed hats, but instead wear the standard squared-off cap of the Han elite.

Data for Phase 3 overwhelmingly suggests that during this time the figure of the mounted archer became limited in terms of geographic spread, socio-political distribution, and medium to Shanbei and its environs, where mid- to low-level officials and local elite commissioned carved stone reliefs or murals to decorate their tombs. This imagery draws on pre-existing prototypes, and as I will argue below, held particular political and cultural significance for the patrons of tomb reliefs from Shanbei, who were neighbors to the Xiongnu and during the Eastern Han increasingly marginalized in the political system.

INTERPRETATION

From the above overview, a basic outline of the characteristics of the figure of the mounted archer, the materials that it decorates, and its geographic spread during the Han dynasty is as follows. Mounted archers are depicted wearing both foreign and Han headgear, hairstyles, and dress, sit facing forward or turned backward in the Parthian shot, and often appear in hunting scenes in mountainous or swirling landscapes alongside other exotic imagery, auspicious symbols, and immortality motifs, with many variations. This iconography remains fairly stable considering the extent of time, geographic spread, and the variety of material surveyed here. The figure appears somewhat suddenly in the archaeological record during the Qin dynasty and then begins to be depicted with increasing frequency in a number of different media spreading out from the Qin and Han capitals to later sites throughout the Han Empire by the beginning of the first century CE. By the late first century CE, however, the geographic spread of finds decreases and becomes concentrated in Shanbei and the surrounding region.

Berthold Laufer (1909) was the first to suggest the appearance of mounted archers chasing animals in mountainous landscapes on Han *hu* and hill jars was connected to Steppe Art, while Alexander Soper (1941: 147–8) and Michael Sullivan (1962: 43–6) have argued that imagery of mounted archers hunting animals was derived from the Ancient Near East. While Sullivan was careful to generalize about the exact “Western Asian” precedents of this imagery, Soper more specifically pointed to a “lost” Achaemenid (550–330 BCE) hunting scene as the inspiration behind Han imagery. More convincingly Jacobson (1985) has suggested that images of mounted archers chasing wild animals

across mountainous landscapes were adapted from fourth-century BCE Scytho-Siberian material culture, which has been excavated in burials across Central Asia, Southern Siberia, and the China–Mongolia border, and which was adopted and adapted by the Xiongnu. According to Jacobson, the Xiongnu in turn passed these elements along to the Han via portable objects exchanged via trade or tribute and diplomatic delegations to the Western Han capital of Chang'an.

Regardless of the exact route and form of transmission, mounted archers were closely associated with the Xiongnu in Han textual sources, who are repeatedly referred to in the *Shi ji* (史記) (*Records of the Historian*) as “the people who draw the bow,” as opposed to the Chinese, who “wear caps and girdles” (Sima 1959). The early success of the Xiongnu against the Han armies was largely due to Xiongnu use of mounted cavalry and guerilla tactics. In response, the Han government established large-scale horse breeding programs in the northwest and trained special regiments of mounted archers to combat Xiongnu military superiority. These programs, the adoption of new military techniques based on Xiongnu strategies, and massive armies enabled several successful campaigns against the Xiongnu in the 120s BCE. It was consequently through these campaigns and the training of expert cavalry regiments that the figure of the mounted archer became associated with not only the Xiongnu, but with specially trained Han mounted archers. This is paralleled by depictions of mounted archers during the Han where they are sometimes represented as foreigners and at other times wear typical Han headgear and clothing.

It is after the Han–Xiongnu wars of the late second century BCE that the figure of the mounted archer begins to appear more regularly in the different media outlined above. The second-century BCE painted mirror and the datable Sanpan shan *bini* (ca. 90 BCE) suggests a top-down process for the spread of such imagery. Few painted mirrors survive, but their decoration, applied with oil-based mineral pigments on a white plaster-like ground in place of cast/inlaid decoration, as well as their depictions of elite activities, suggests a wealthy patron (Liu 2005: 382). The bronze chariot ornament comes from the tomb of a leader of the Zhongshan (中山) kingdom, one of several kingdoms ruled by members of the imperial family, but administered by the central government. This object, unlike many later artifacts on which the figure of the mounted archer appears, was made as part of a larger object, an elaborate chariot, which was a symbol of the king’s royal status and was made specifically for him after his predecessor died (Wu 1984: 39). At the time the imagery seems to have been fairly unique, but templates for its decorative elements, such as the mounted archer and the landscape, must have existed in other media and are already present in the decoration of Qin tomb bricks.

The second highest elite object on which the figure of the mounted archer appears and one that may have also been used in life as well as death are lacquer toiletry cases. The decoration of these toiletry cases draws on a set of motifs and patterns, but is also individualized and sometimes includes the use of other luxury materials, like gold and silver. The bronze chariot ornaments and lacquer toiletry cases can be compared to later mass-produced items that were clearly made using stamps, stencils, or pattern books such as the ceramic *hu* and hill jars, tomb bricks, and reliefs, which consequently were also all produced to be used in a mortuary context. Their patrons were in general also of lower status and fueled the growing market for cheaper mortuary art as the Han dynasty progressed.

The exotic nature of the figure of the mounted archer, coupled with the relative success of Han expansion, accounted for its popularity during the first century CE. Although the massively expensive wars against the Xiongnu were already beginning to have their staunch critics in the first century BCE, the negative views of empire that appear in such texts as the *Yantie lun* (鹽鐵論) (*Salt and Iron Debates*) were probably not held by the public at large and the figure of the mounted archer repeatedly appears along with *xiangrui* (祥瑞) (auspicious) imagery and immortality motifs. Although there are problems with directly equating the imagery that appears on *bini* and later items with *xiangrui* imagery and omens presented at the Han court (Wu 1984) and descriptions of Han elite hunting parks (Rawson 1998), as noted by Wang (2005: 345), the exotic appeal of the figure of the mounted archer during the Western Han dynasty is clear in a wide variety of media (Benningson 2005; Rawson 1999).

But, by the late first century CE, the Han Empire had changed. The conservative detractors of a larger empire had largely won out as the military power of the Han government was greatly curtailed and could only maintain some of the boundaries established during the Western Han. By the time of the final decisive victory over the Xiongnu in 50 CE, the figure of the mounted archer seems to have lost its magic in the popular imagination.

Individuals living in Shanbei appear to have been an exception to this trend, and in the late first century CE instead began to showcase the figure of the mounted archer in scenes of the hunt decorating the lintels of doorways to their tombs. The selection of this imagery may not have been surprising to contemporaries, as the Han historian Ban Gu (班固, 32–92 CE) noted that the region was well known for its mounted archers and its contribution to the earlier expansion and defense of the Han Empire:

As for Anding, Beidi, Xihe, and Shang commanderies, all are compelled by the closeness of the Rong and Di to practice combat readiness. They esteem moral integrity and physical strength. They consider hunting and using the bow and arrow as the highest (skill) ... After the re-establishment of the Han dynasty, sons from the best families from these

commanderies were selected to fill the offices of the Feathered Forest and the Qimen with capable officials; a number of famous generals were born there ... (Ban 1968: 1644)

During the Han dynasty Shanbei was under the jurisdiction of Xihe (西河) and Shang (上) commanderies and, as the Han historian Ban Gu suggests in the above passage from the “Dili zhi 地理志” (“Treatise on Geography”; *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Han Dynasty*) 28), was part of a large militarized, culturally mixed frontier zone, which during the Western Han produced several generals responsible for Han victories against the Xiongnu.

The fate of the region, which was settled in the wake of the Han–Xiongnu Wars of the 120s BCE, roughly followed the historical expansion and contraction of the Han Empire itself. Its heyday occurred in the first century BCE as its population swelled and those born in the northwestern commanderies held high positions in the Han military and bureaucracy, but during the turbulent years of the Wang Mang Interregnum (9–23 CE), the region once again fell under the control of the Xiongnu. In 50 CE, the region returned to Han control, with the surrender of the leader of the Southern Xiongnu, who was forced to move his court to Meiji (美稷) in Shanbei, in tandem with the resettlement of the region by Han immigrants. It was just after these events, in the late first century CE, that tombs with doorways decorated with carved stone reliefs were produced in the region. Based on surviving inscriptions, the height of tomb construction in Shanbei was roughly between 90 and 110 CE, although tombs continued to be decorated with stone reliefs in the region until around 140, when after a Xiongnu uprising, the Han government officially abandoned most of Shanbei for good. Tombs with decorated stone doors continued to be created to the east near Lishi (離石), Shanxi, which became the new administrative seat of Xihe commandery, until around 175.

Tomb inscriptions, passages from the standard histories, and scenes from tomb reliefs suggest that the patrons of these reliefs were civilian or military officials, landowners, salt profiteers, or merchants (Shih 1961; Wallace 2010). About half of extant inscriptions record that the deceased held a low-level position in the civilian bureaucracy under the *taishou* (太守 governor) of Xihe commandery. Two individuals are also recorded as holding positions directly connected to the military: 1) Niu Liping (牛李平 d. 139), who held the military position of *wei* (尉) (commandant), and 2) Wang Junwei (王君威), who was a *shizhe* (使者 scribe) under the *Hu Wuhuan xiaowei* (護鳴桓校尉) (Colonel-Protector of the Wuhuan). Although the majority of the inscriptions refer to positions in the civilian administration under the *taishou* of Xihe, passages from the *Hou Han shu* (后漢書 *History of the Later Han Dynasty*) record that the *taishou* performed a number of military responsibilities as well, indicating the highly militarized nature of the region (DeCrespiigny 1984: 5).

Based on Han administrative practice, these inscriptions suggest that some of the patrons were locals who were hired by the civilian and military bureaucracy to perform administrative tasks. Within the Han bureaucracy, officials who held higher positions such as *taishou* were rotated to prevent them from forming a local power base; their bodies whenever possible would have been returned to their family upon death. The tombs themselves lack ornate burial goods and confine more expensive stone tomb reliefs to the doorways and entranceways between the chambers, further suggesting the lower- to middle-rank status of the deceased (Wallace 2010).

Given the militarized nature of the region and the martial background of some of the patrons, it is not surprising that they clung to the figure of the mounted archer in scenes of the hunt as: 1) hunting via horseback using a bow most likely served as a leisure activity that also supplemented military training throughout the region, and 2) mounted archers referenced the Western Han government's successful campaigns against the Xiongnu and the political and military significance of the region. Nostalgia for the glory days of the Western Han also seems to be referenced visually in these reliefs, which draw heavily on earlier Western Han imagery, motifs, and patterns. Martin J. Powers (1991: 162) has argued that tomb reliefs from Nanyang, Henan, Sichuan, and Shaanxi are a continuation of Western Han cloud and animal imagery and the "ornamental tradition" originally associated with the aristocracy, which was adopted by their patrons as a sign of wealth and status. I would argue that the adoption of these elements in Shaanxi may be more complicated than Powers suggests and may have had a nostalgic appeal for the patrons of the Shanbei reliefs, who associated it with the bygone days of Han imperial expansion when the region and its inhabitants were at their political and economic height.

Furthermore, the figure of the mounted archer suggests not only the unique culture of the region, but also the path to political power of individuals from the northwestern commanderies, which was increasingly blocked during the Eastern Han. During the Western Han it was possible for individuals to begin their careers in the military and rise to the highest ranks of the Han bureaucracy. When the focus of the empire shifted eastward and the capital was moved to Luoyang, administrative structures favored scholar-officials from eastern portions of the Han Empire, and military men, who primarily came from the northwestern commanderies, were denigrated (Wai Kit Wicky Tse 2012). As Wai Kit Wicky Tse (2012) has demonstrated, it was ultimately the disenfranchisement of those living in the northwestern commanderies, who lived in a world in which status was directly connected to the military, but who were largely blocked from climbing the Eastern Han bureaucratic ladder, which led to the rise of warlords such as Dong Zhuo (董卓 d. 192 CE) and the final collapse of the Eastern Han dynasty.

The visual counterpart to the East–West divide between scholars–officials from Shandong and military men from the northwest can be seen in the selection of imagery in their tombs. Mounted archers are noticeably absent from tombs of scholars in Shandong, which instead often contain Confucian imagery directly connected to the examination system and other means of advancement available to scholar-officials (Powers 1991). Confucian imagery on the other hand is conspicuously absent from tomb reliefs in Shanbei, where the patrons seem to have found them just as inappropriate as the scholar-officials found the figure of the mounted archer in Shandong.

CONCLUSION

Building on the concept of object lineages presented in the introduction to this volume, I have constructed an image lineage for the figure of the mounted archer during the Han dynasty. Adopted and adapted from Scytho-Siberian culture, the figure of the mounted archer was “born” in the wake of the Qin and Han empires and became a popular figure decorating burial goods in the first century BCE. With the contraction of the Han Empire in the first century CE, the popularity of the figure declined, although it continued to remain a popular image decorating Eastern Han tomb reliefs in Shanbei.

Using a modified form of the biographical approach to trace the trajectory of the figure of the mounted archer during the Han dynasty has shed new light on Han adoption and adaption of foreign culture, changes in mortuary art from the Western to Eastern Han, and the history of the Han northern frontier. This study has demonstrated just how much the figure of the mounted archer was closely tied to the ebb and flow of the Han Empire and its continued conflicts with the Xiongnu. Rather than simply being an element of exotica, however, the imagery became associated with the Xiongnu, the specialized mounted cavalry developed to combat them, and Han imperial expansion. Its later popularity in Shanbei versus its appearance across a variety of earlier media and contexts during the Western Han also illustrates increasing regionalism in tomb art during the Eastern Han. Although at this time mortuary art draws on similar sets of objects and images, they are combined in ways that were meaningful to different regional groups of patrons. In this case the popularity of hunting scenes focused on the figure of the mounted archer remained a potent marker of political and cultural identity to patrons from Shanbei, while it was discarded in other regions where tomb reliefs, bricks, and murals were produced. The selection of this motif by elite individuals in Shanbei and surrounding areas also brings a new perspective to the complicated political and cultural dynamics of the region, which is usually only mentioned in textual sources in the context of repeated conflicts between the Han and Xiongnu.

As this case study has shown, although not fundamentally different from object biographies or object lineages, the construction of an image lineage brings with it a number of challenges not germane to studies of individual object or groups of objects. Most significant is the ability of images to jump between various media and between static and portable objects, with the possibility of proliferation being high, but dependent on the types of object on which the image appears and the general political, cultural, and social context. For example, in my particular case study I have found that the imagery actually becomes restricted over time, both in terms of medium and geographic spread, an outcome that is different from most traditional object biographies, but I do not think this is in any way endemic to image lineages. Instead it is the result of the overarching political and historical context and concomitant changes in patronage and taste both in tomb decoration and mortuary goods over a 400-year period. In fact the possibility of proliferation over time seems higher in the case of image lineages because images can be used to decorate multiple kinds of objects. I think it is most likely that other image lineages would follow the more common path seen in object biographies and object lineages of multiplication and expansion over a particular period of time.

In fact, the collapse of the Han dynasty did not signal the “death” or abandonment of the figure of the mounted archer, which would continue to have many more reincarnations, especially during the rise of later dynasties, like the Tang (618–906), whose power was tied to military skill on horseback. Tang imagery, such as the mounted archer decorating a *sancai* (三彩) phoenix-headed ewer (late seventh–first half of eighth century CE) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1991.253.4), which depicts a mounted archer turned backward in his saddle framed by half-palmettes, speaks to an interest in exotica that is characteristic of Tang cosmopolitanism as well as Tang military strength. Although significant to different audiences in different contexts, later mounted archer imagery demonstrates its continued political and cultural appeal and enduring associations with mobile pastoralists and martial power.

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NINE

DYNAMIC BETWEEN FORM AND MATERIAL: THE *BI* DISC IN WESTERN HAN NOBLE BURIAL RITUAL

Eileen Hau-ling Lam*

The *bi* (璧) disc is regarded as one of the most time-honored jade forms used from the Neolithic period until today. A single *bi* disc from the ancient period usually had its biography terminated in burial until it was rediscovered; as a type of object, however, its life history seems endless. Because objects or materials are able to acquire and accumulate biographies or lineages when kept in use and in different contexts (Kopytoff 1986; Hoskins 1998; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Joy 2009; Knappett 2013), the recurrent use of the *bi* disc as a type will reveal here a complex lineage and a long historical trajectory. During its long life course and because it is still one of the most popularly used jade objects, there is a perception that the *bi* disc had a deep-rooted symbolic association with the material of jade itself as well as its shape. Nevertheless, despite the fact that its form has remained unchanged throughout the ages, the presentation and the signification of its form and material (jade) kept evolving as perceptions of the materiality of this object changed.

During the Western Han (202 BCE–8 CE), belief in the durability of jade was closely related to immortality and the mortuary use of *bi* discs was widely

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distributed in both high-ranking and modest cemeteries throughout and beyond the realm of Han. Interestingly, recent finds also demonstrate that a wide range of materials such as glass, wood, clay, etc. were used for manufacturing *bi* discs in addition to jade. By the later Han, images of *bi* discs were depicted in mural paintings or inscribed on stone steles. Although these non-jade *bi* discs are generally perceived as less precious simulations of jade originals, evidence to date indicates that the situation was neither simple nor linked only to the availability of jade. This will be further addressed below where the issue will be related to the biographical development of the *bi* disc and when its form was detached from the material of jade.

By adopting a biographical approach to examine the discoveries of various non-jade *bi* discs, their signification in Western Han noble tombs that concurrently held jade *bi* discs will be untangled. This chapter will explore the lineage and itinerary of this specific type of object and chart the trajectory of the connotations attached both to the material of jade and to its shape.

JADE BI DISCS DATED BEFORE THE HAN

Bi discs have been documented in burials in late Neolithic and Bronze Age China in several locations, but the largest number have been found concentrated in the lower Yangtze River region. In this period, jade (nephrite) and various other stones with attractive appearances were made into discs. At that time jade and other stones were not precisely and scientifically differentiated, as is reflected in the definition of *yu* jade (玉) in the *Shuowen* (说文), the earliest Chinese dictionary complied by the Eastern Han scholar Xu Shen (许慎) (ca. 58–147 CE). It said “*yu* jade is the fairest of stones” (Hansford 1950: 31); Xu did not further elaborate on the standard of “the fairest of stones.” Besides, by looking at archaeologically yielded finds, many different fine stones such as crystal, hornblende, agate, amber, or even marble were also regarded as jade in early times. For example, the stone pedants from the Warring States tomb of the king of Zhongshan (中山王) (ca. 310 BCE) were called jade pedants according to the ink inscriptions on the objects themselves (Hebei 1996: 439–41, 443). Meanwhile, the exact function and symbolic meaning of jade *bi* discs during the late Neolithic and Bronze Age periods remain under discussion, but it is most generally accepted that the *bi* disc was a representation of heaven (Shen 1991; Liu Zheng 2012). Although this interpretation lacks textual support from the Neolithic period, it echoes a statement about the *bi* disc in the *Rites of the Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周礼), a well-known early Chinese text that was compiled during the Warring States period (ca. 403–221 BCE):

Jade is made into six (ceremonial) objects to worship heaven, earth and the four directions. Greenish *bi* discs are used for worshiping heaven;

yellowish *cong* is used for worshiping the earth ... (以玉作六器，以礼天地四方。以苍璧礼天，以黄琮礼地 ...)

It is difficult to find any substantial archaeological evidence to verify the above statement, but there is another narrative about the *bi* disc in the *Rites of the Zhou*:

Bi disc and *cong* are arranged for the burial of the deceased (疏璧、琮，以敛尸).

This description is indeed more in accordance with the archaeological record, which has located *bi* discs primarily in burials. For instance, considerable numbers of *bi* discs have been found in burials of the Liangzhu (良渚) culture (ca. 4000–2500 BCE). Almost 400 of them have been unearthed from Neolithic burials to date, and over half (226 pieces) came from the lower Yangtze River area (Li Yanhong 2008: 282–3). For example, Liangzhu burial M₃ at Sidun (寺墩), Wujin (武进) County, in Changzhou (常州), Jiangsu (江苏) province (Nanjing 1984), and tomb M₂₃ at Fanshan (反山), Yuhang (余杭) County, Zhejiang (浙江) province (Zhejiang 1988), yielded twenty-four and thirty-seven jade *bi* discs respectively. The more finely carved *bi* discs were placed on the abdomen of the deceased, while other crudely made plain jade *bi* discs were put near or beneath the head and feet (Yang 2013: 34). The use of jade *bi* discs diminished when the Liangzhu culture disappeared (Rawson 1995: 130–1) and they were relatively scarce during the periods between the late Neolithic and the fifth century BCE. During the later Eastern Zhou period (late fifth century BCE), a dramatic change took place in the region of the state of Chu (楚国), where numbers of large jade discs were found placed upon the deceased in tombs in present-day Anhui (安徽) (Anhui 1982: 59), Henan (河南) (Gushihou 1981: 6), and Hubei (湖北) (Hubei 1989: 402–3). This use has been interpreted as a key step toward adopting the *bi* disc in mortuary ritual in an effort to protect the body, a notion that had become popular in the Han (Rawson 1995: 248). This is also considered as a custom that continued from knowledge of the Liangzhu that was revived in the *Rites of the Zhou* text that states that the “*bi* disc and *cong* were arranged for the burial of the deceased.” At that time, however, the *cong* had disappeared and only the *bi* disc continued to serve mortuary purposes.

NON-JADE BI DISC BEFORE THE WESTERN HAN

Between the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods the number of *bi* discs yielded in burials varied and its surface decoration experienced significant changes – from a plain surface to ones covered with rows of spirals in relief or an outer band of four animal heads with intertwined bodies surrounding an inner zone

with crisscross patterns. During this period, the major material for manufacturing *bi* discs, particularly for the high-ranking tombs, was jade.

Nevertheless, there are exceptions. From archaeological evidence available, non-jade *bi* discs were made long before the Han in the Neolithic period. Although there are only very few examples (only three ceramic *bi* discs) – compared with around 400 jade *bi* discs that have been discovered in Neolithic burials – one was found in the lower Yangzi River area and the other two were found in Shandong (山东) and Liangguang (两广), the former Nanyue (南越) region (Li Yanhong 2008: 283). There are other examples of non-jade *bi* discs found in burials dated prior to the Warring States period, but there is also no substantial evidence to show continuity across that time.

Up to the Warring States period, materials other than jade, mainly *liao* (料) glass and talc, were more commonly used to manufacture *bi* discs. These glass or talc examples were restricted to commoners' tombs in present-day Hunan (湖南) province, while all large and important tombs only contained jade discs (Zhou 1988: 553). Scholars generally accept that this was because the region had limited jade available, but did have abundant sources for talc and raw materials for making glass at that time (Zhou 1988; Brill 1991; Fu 1999; Li Zhen 2001; Yuan Lai 2001; Huang 2005). Even though the *bi* disc was made of lesser materials, it remained a significant ritual object in burial, as even modest tombs held one *bi* disc found close to the head of the deceased (Zhongguo 1957: 65). Apart from placing a *bi* disc there, imitations of other ritual objects such as bronze vessels and metal weapons were also found interred in these modest tombs, but they were generally made of clay to replace the bronze vessels and wood to replace the metal weapons (see Hunan 1963a, Hunan 1977). Among a wide choice of lesser materials, glass and talc were most typically selected to produce *bi* discs. The use of talc was popular not only because of its availability and affordable price, but also because glass and talc resemble jade in appearance. This suggests that the visual likeness to jade for non-jade *bi* discs was essential, even though they were only simulations. In other words, even though the modest tombs used less precious imitations, these items preserved the shape, color, and sheen of jade, presumably in order to retain the potency of the object in the burial context.

JADE AND NON-JADE BI DISCS FOUND IN WESTERN HAN TOMBS

By the time of Western Han, glass and talc *bi* discs became more widely distributed. Besides Hunan, non-jade *bi* discs were also found in tombs in Anhui, Guangdong (广东), Jiangsu, Jiangxi (江西), Hubei, Hunan, Shandong, Shanxi (山西) provinces, etc. (Fu 1999; Yuan 2001; Lam 2011). Talc *bi* discs became more prevalent, while glass *bi* discs were found in smaller quantities, and both were found not only in small tombs but also in elite tombs (Wang

Province	Material							Total
	Talc	Glass	Ceramic	Lacquer	Wood	Gilt bronze	Hawksbill	
Hunan	4			I	66+		2	73+
Guangdong		5	145					150
Jiangsu	5		210			5		220
Shaanxi		I						I
Total	9	6	355	I	66	5	2	444+

9.1. Distribution of non-jade *bi* discs from Western Han noble tombs (created by the author).

Province	Material									Total
	Talc	Glass	Ceramic	Wood	Bronze	Ivory	Lead	Agate	Cow horn	
Anhui			I							I
Guangdong	13	9	22							44
Jiangsu	10	✓			I					11+
Jiangxi						4				4
Hubei		3		I	✓				I	5+
Hunan	113	36	6	2			II			168
Shandong					2					2
Shanxi		✓						2		2+
Sichuan				✓						✓
Total	136	48+	29	3+	3+	4	II	2	I	237+

9.2. Distribution of non-jade *bi* discs from Western Han lower-ranking tombs (created by the author).

and Zhu 1976; Guangzhou 1991a: 133) (Figures 9.1 and 9.2). Moreover, other materials were adopted for making *bi* discs such as clay, bronze, gilt bronze, wood, lacquer, hawksbill, agate, ivory, cattle horn, etc. In addition, virtual depictions also were painted as a new way to present *bi* discs.

Figures 9.1 and 9.2 show that there are altogether more than 679 examples of non-jade *bi* discs discovered to date. There are a number of Western Han modest tombs in Hunan and Hubei that have yielded jade *bi* discs, usually one disc per tomb (for selected instances see Changsha 1986; Hubei 1976). A large proportion, over 444 of the non-jade *bi* discs, came from Western Han nobles' tombs, including: tombs no. 1 and no. 2 at Xiaoqiushan (小龟山) in Xuzhou (徐州), Jiangsu province, which have tremendous numbers of clay *bi* discs, for example, around 200 pieces in tomb no. 2 were found on and around the coffin (Nanjing 1973; Nanjing 1985). The tomb of the king of Nanyue held

five glass *bi* discs and 145 ceramic *bi* discs (Guangzhou 1991a: 76, 133, 178–9, 267); the tomb of the king of Changsha (长沙), in Shazitang (砂子塘), Hunan (湖南) province yielded ten wooden *bi* discs (Hunan 1963b); tomb no. 2 of the Marquis Dai (轪侯) at Mawangdui (马王堆) in Changsha, Hunan province contained two hawksbill *bi* discs (Hunan 2004: 23); while the well-known tomb no. 1 of Lady Dai also at Mawangdui in Changsha city, Hunan province, held one lacquer *bi* disc and thirty-two wooden *bi* discs (Hunan 1972: plate 10, 12; Hunan 1973a: 36–7, fig. 36). (For details, see Figures 9.3 and 9.4.)

The excavated numbers and the breadth of adoption of jade *bi* discs show that they were preferred at that time. According to Shi Wenjia (2011), more than 855 jade *bi* discs have been found to date and they are widely scattered over Anhui, Shaanxi (陕西), Beijing (北京), Hebei (河北), Henan, Hunan, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Guangxi (广西), Shandong, and Zhejiang provinces. These tombs range from princely to ones of low-ranking officials. More than half (434) came from noble tombs (Figure 9.5) and some of those tombs yielded a tremendous number of jade discs. For example, the tomb of the king of Liang (梁王) at Xishan (僖山), Henan province, held over seventy discs even though it had been looted; the intact tomb of the king of Nanyue in Guangzhou (广州), Guangdong province contained seventy. In contrast, the lower-ranking tombs usually only have one to several pieces. Regardless of the rank of the deceased, most of these jade *bi* discs were interred close to the corpse, and it is believed that this was a mortuary ritual practice aimed at protecting the physical body. Although a small number of the *bi* discs were strung on a pendant, they were also placed on or very near to the deceased.

By looking at the number of jade and non-jade *bi* discs found in Western Han tombs, the jade *bi* disc is far more evenly distributed than the non-jade examples. Although non-jade *bi* discs are more widely scattered when compared to those used during the Warring States, most of the non-jade *bi* discs were found in the south and east of China – Hunan, Jiangsu, and Guangdong provinces – while other provinces yielded very few (Figures 9.1, 9.2). This phenomenon is particularly apparent in the findings of noble tombs. It is likely that the southern regions maintained a long-term practice of using non-jade materials for producing discs beginning in the Warring States, but it did not spread far beyond these regions. Compared to the finds of non-jade *bi* discs in modest or ordinary contemporary tombs, the number of jade *bi* discs in noble tombs was far higher – an ordinary tomb generally had one or several; a noble's tomb could have up to 200. In addition, the presentation of non-jade *bi* discs was different. In small tombs they were usually placed near the head of the deceased, while in the nobles' tombs they were found in various locations. Some were placed near the head of the deceased, but were hung from the top of the inner coffin or were painted directly on it. Most, however, were placed in a compartment. Interestingly eight out of these ten tombs also contained

Tomb	Tomb Owner	Intact	Non-jade <i>bi</i> disc					Jade <i>bi</i> disc
			Glass	Ceramic	Wood/lacquer	Talc	Other	
Tomb no. 1 at Mawangdui, in Changsha city, Hunan province	Lady Dai (Wife of Marquis Dai)	✓			1 lacquer; 32 wooden		3	x
Tomb no. 2 at Mawangdui, in Changsha city, Hunan province	Li Cang (利仓), Marquis Dai	x				2 hawksbill		I
Tomb at Shazitang, in Changsha city, Hunan province	Wu Zhu (吳著), King of Changsha	✓			wooden: several dozens		2	I
“Cao Xun” (曹[女巽]) tomb in Changsha city, Hunan province	Cao Xun, Queen of Changsha	x				4		12
“Yu Yang” (漁陽) tomb in Changsha city, Hunan province	Yu Yang, Queen of Changsha	x			4 wooden			✓
Tomb of the King of Nanyue in Guangzhou city, Guangdong province	Zhao Mo (趙眜), King of Nanyue	✓	5	145				70
Tomb of the King of Chu in Shizishan in Xuzhou city, Jiangsu province	Liu Yingke (劉郢客) or Liu Mao (劉戊), the 2nd or 3rd King of Chu	x					bi images inscribed on jade plaques attached to coffin	29
Tomb of the King of Chu in Beidongshan in Xuzhou city, Jiangsu province	Liu Dao (劉道), the 5th King of Chu	x				5 gilt bronze plaques with <i>bi</i> disc impression		9
Tomb no. 1 at Xiaoqiushan in Xuzhou city, Jiangsu province	An unknown noble, subordinate tomb of tomb no. 2	x		200				8
Tomb no. 2 at Xiaoqiushan in Xuzhou city, Jiangsu province	Liu Zhu (劉注), the 6th King of Chu	x		10				✓
“Liu Shen” (劉慎) tomb in Xuzhou city, Jiangsu province	A noble of the Chu Kingdom	x				5		2
Mao mausoleum (茂陵), Shaanxi province	Emperor Wu	?	1					?

9.3. Discoveries of different types of *bi* discs from Western Han high-ranking noble tombs (created by the author).



9.4. Map of the distribution of jade and non-jade *bi* discs from Western Han noble tombs (created by the author).

Province	Number of noble tombs yielded jade <i>bi</i> discs	Number of yielded jade <i>bi</i> discs	Number of noble tombs yielded non-jade <i>bi</i> discs	Number of yielded non-jade <i>bi</i> discs	Number of noble tombs yielded both jade and non-jade <i>bi</i> discs
Beijing	2	8	-	-	-
Guangdong	1	70	1	150	1
Hebei	5	75	-	-	-
Henan	6	140+	-	-	-
Hunan	7	53	5	73+	4
Jiangsu	6	48	3	220	3
Shaanxi	-	-	1	1	-
Shandong	3	40	-	-	-
Total	30	434+	10	444+	8
Average no. in each tomb	-	14	-	44	-

9.5. Comparison of jade and non-jade *bi* discs from Western Han noble tombs (created by the author).

(Sources of figures: Shi 2011: 44, 49–51; Yuan Shengwen 2012: 77–8)

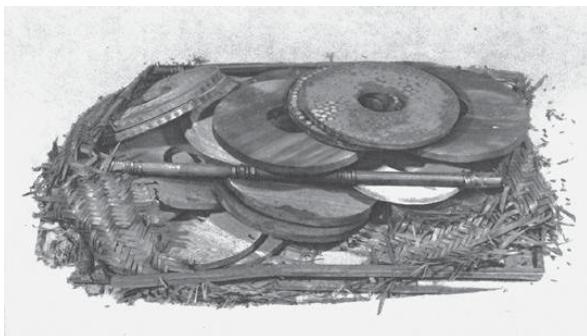
jade *bi* discs, some in huge numbers such as in the tomb of the king of Nanyue. Also, sometimes jade *bi* discs were even placed together with the non-jade discs (Figures 9.3 and 9.5). Therefore, the adoption of non-jade *bi* discs in these Western Han nobles' tombs was different from and far more complicated than the patterns found in ordinary tombs. They differ in total number of items, in the variety of materials of manufacture, and in the manner of presentation.

In the high-status elite tombs, the richness of burial materials included *bi* discs and other excellent jade objects such as jade suits and jade vessels (Guangzhou 1991a: 76, 133, 178–9, 267). The choice of using non-jade *bi* discs in these tombs, therefore, was perhaps not caused exclusively by a shortage in the availability of jade or by economic considerations. By bearing in mind the consistency in form and the variety of materials chosen for *bi* discs in various contexts reviewed above, we can easily see that a reconsideration of the long-standing arguments about placement of jade and non-jade *bi* discs in these high-ranking tombs is necessary.

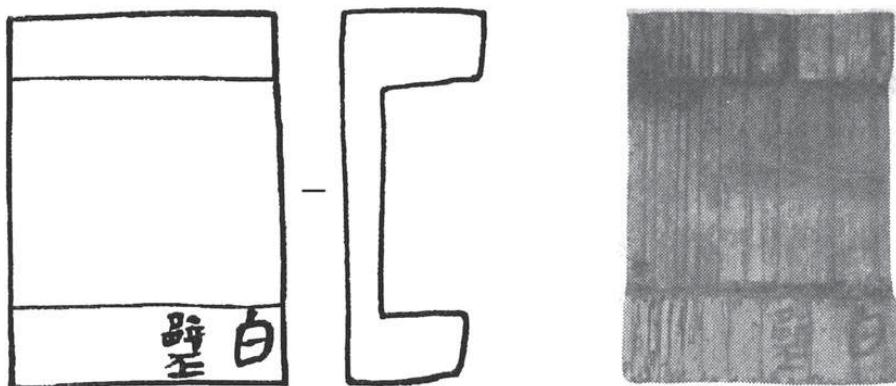
THE PLACEMENT OF THE NON-JADE *BI* DISC IN WESTERN HAN ELITE TOMBS

In nobles' tombs the location of the non-jade *bi* discs was clearly separate from the jade examples. The jade *bi* discs were usually put in the inner coffin and placed close to or at the head of the deceased, while non-jade *bi* discs were commonly stored in a compartment that was next to the coffin, or were scattered on the coffin (Nanjing 1973). The total number of non-jade *bi* discs was generally far higher than jade *bi* discs. This arrangement demonstrates that although these two kinds of *bi* discs were placed in the same tombs, they served different purposes and functions.

In addition to the chosen location and quantity of non-jade *bi* discs, they share yet another common noteworthy feature. In the tomb of Lady Dai at Mawangdui, thirty-two wooden *bi* discs were found; twenty-three were encased in a bamboo chest in the western compartment and another nine plain discs were found in the southern compartment. Among the twenty-three wooden discs in the western compartment, four at the top were coated with a layer of gold powder and painted with a dotted pattern on the surface, eleven were coated with silver powder, while the remaining ones were plain (cf. Hunan 1973a: 118–20, fig. 104). Interestingly, the chest of discs matches an item listed on the manuscripts of the tomb inventory, which records “mu bai *bi* sheng *bi* yi si (木白璧生璧一笥),” which literally means “a case of white wooden *bi* discs and *sheng bi* discs.” The archaeological report speculated that both “bai *bi* (白璧)” and “sheng *bi* (生璧)” refer to the discs with coats of gold or silver powder (Hunan 1973a: 119–20, 152–3) (Figure 9.6). In tomb no. 3 of the Marquis Dai's son at Mawangdui, an item called “mu bai *bi* sheng *bi* yi si (木白璧生璧一笥)”



9.6. Wooden *bi* discs in a bamboo casket, from the tomb of Lady Dai at Mawangdui, Hunan province. (Photo from Hunan 1973b: plate 224.)



9.7. Wooden cartridge for seal clay, from the tomb of the king of Changsha at Shazitang, Changsha, Hunan province. (Left: line drawing from Hunan 1963b: 21, fig. 9.33; right: image from Hunan 1963b: plate 6.33.)

is also recorded on the tomb inventory; however, no corresponding objects have been discovered in that tomb (Hunan 2004: 65–6). Similarly, the tomb of the king of Changsha at Shazitang yielded several dozen plain wooden *bi* discs in the head compartment. A wooden cartridge for holding clay seals was found in the tomb and was inscribed with two characters, “bai *bi* (白璧),” which literally means “white *bi* disc” (Hunan 1963b: 22, fig. 9.33, plate 6.33) (Figure 9.7). Archaeologists think the words on this wooden cartridge refer to the wooden discs, and thus suggest that they were overt substitutes for the white jade *bi* discs. Likewise, among the ten ceramic discs unearthed from tomb no. 2 at Xiaoqiushan in Xuzhou, some have traces of white-colored pigments remaining on the surface (Nanjing 1985: 128, fig. 7.6). These discoveries demonstrate a strategic emphasis on placement of non-jade *bi* discs in compartments next to or near the coffin and on the color white, either by labeling or coloring them white, so as to resemble and represent white jade *bi*

discs. This situation leads us to question what the significance of white *bi* discs was in the Han burial context.

AS A TOKEN OF WEALTH: THE FORM

Apart from the excavated materials, there is a paucity of sources for us to understand the implication of white jade *bi* discs in burials. A few Eastern Zhou and Han texts provide some reference to the contemporary perception of white jade and white jade *bi* discs. *Qingzhong of Guanzi* (管子. 轻重) (by Guan Zhong 管仲 d. 645 BCE) states “white jade *bi* disc is valued as [much as] thousands of gold (辟千金者，白璧也).” While *Dishu of Guanz* (管子. 地数) (by Guan Zhong 管仲 d. 645 BCE) states that jade was even more valuable than gold at the time: “Pearl and jade are regarded as high-value currency, gold is medium-value currency … (珠玉为上币，黄金为中币).” In both the *Shiji* (史记) (by Sima Qian 司馬迁 ca. 145–86 BCE) and the *Han Shu* (汉书) (by Ban Gu 班固 32–92 CE), a white jade *bi* disc is mentioned as a prized tribute presented to the emperor or as an honorable reward granted by the ruler. In addition, the *Liji* (礼记 *The Book of Rites*) (annotated by Zheng Xuan 郑玄 127–200 CE) states that white jade was exclusively for use by the Son of Heaven, and that jade is the most esteemed jade:

The Son of Heaven (*Tianzi*) wears white jade that is strung with dark-colored ribbons, a marquis wears black jade that is strung with vermillion ribbons … (天子佩白玉而玄组绶，公侯佩山玄玉而朱组绶 …).

Taken together, these texts reveal that a white jade *bi* disc was valuable and could be symbolic of supreme wealth as well as prestige. Perhaps this was reinforced by the findings of a tremendous number of clay ingots and/or clay money placed or even mingled in with the non-jade discs in the nobles’ burials: in tomb no. 1 at Xiaoqiushan three jade *bi* discs were placed in the coffin; four jade *bi* discs were placed beside the coffin and mingled with 200 ceramic *bi* discs and 600 ceramic ingots (Nanjing 1973: 22, 27, 46, fig. 3, 4); in the tomb of Lady Dai at Mawangdui, over 300 clay ingots *ying cheng* (郢称) and forty baskets containing over 100,000 clay *ban liang* (半两) were discovered (Hunan 1973a: 126, fig. 110); and, in the tomb of the king of Changsha at Shazitang, several dozen clay ingots *ying cheng* and eight clay *ban liang* were found (Hunan 1963b: 23, figs. 7.5–7.7). This further suggests that the discs served a similar purpose as the clay money. Apparently, the clay ingots or clay money simulated and substituted for real gold or money, and were regarded as a display of the wealth of the owners, placed to insure enjoyment and support in the afterlife. Hence, the non-jade *bi* discs in Western Han nobles’ tombs not only substituted for another material, white jade, but also symbolized wealth and power. The larger the number placed in the tomb, the greater the wealth of

the owners. The inferior materials such as wood or clay adopted to substitute for jade did not bear the appearance of jade, but merely resembled the shape and roughly the color and engraved patterns on white jade discs. This combination became an ideal formula for mass reproduction. By simulating the form and not the material appearance of the original these inferior non-jade discs, though of little value on earth, in the Western Han nobles' burials were able to serve as substitutes and spirit objects (*mingqi* 明器) for the white jade disc in order to symbolize the worldly wealth and power of the deceased and also to secure the owner's comfort in afterlife.

THE POWER OF IMMORTALITY: THE MATERIAL

In Western Han, jade was regarded as being possessed of the power to prevent the decomposition of the body. It was a deep-rooted belief that jade and stones had magical properties, and were thought to be efficacious to ward off demons and prevent the body from decay.

The *Huainan Wanbi Shu* (淮南万毕术), attributed to Liu An (刘安) (ca. 180–122 BCE), said that “burying stones at the four corners of the house would prevent it from being disturbed by ghosts (埋石四隅，家无鬼)” (Lin 2004: 334). Also, the biography of Wang Mang (王莽传) in the *Han Shu* mentions that a piece of excellent jade could cure a wound. And the *Hou Han Shu* (后汉书) (ca. 398–445 CE), a biography of Liu Penzi (刘盆子传), records that the bodies of Empress Lü (吕后) and other nobles placed in jade shrouds from the imperial mausoleums of the Western Han were all well preserved and still looked lifelike nearly 200 years later when the Vermilion Eyebrows Soldier (赤眉军) dug out the tombs (Lin 2004: 334). These stories may not be factual, but they do expose contemporary beliefs about jade during the Han.

The Han belief in the preservative powers of jade was supported in various classical texts of the time, and has been further reinforced by the archaeological evidence that has located many jade objects in the innermost layer of the burial. Such was especially the case in mountain tombs of Han nobles such as the intact tombs of the king of Nanyue and the king of Zhongshan. The corpses of these nobles were covered with layers of jade *bi* discs and the deceased both wore jade suits, a prevalent practice in noble tombs of that time (Kao and Yang 1983; Thorp 1991; Rawson 1998; Lin 2003). This perhaps explains why although jade and non-jade discs were buried in the same tomb, only jade discs were placed in the coffin and close to the deceased. Clearly the jade itself was critically important and its perceived power could not be replaced by any other material, regardless of its similarity or resemblance to the appearance of jade *bi* discs.

Interestingly, in the foot compartment of the coffin and the western chamber of the tomb of the king of Nanyue, there were non-jade *bi* discs mingled with



9.8. 139 ceramic *bi* discs with two jade *bi* discs and a silver box in the foot compartment of the tomb of the King of Nanyue, Guangzhou, Guangdong province. (Photo from Guangzhou 1991b: plate 86.2.)

jade *bi* discs. This seems inconsistent with the above-mentioned situation that jade and non-jade discs were usually placed separately. By careful examination, in the foot compartment, 139 grey-white or yellowish white ceramic discs were divided into four bundles, a silver box that contained pills, and two larger greenish jade *bi* discs placed underneath the ceramic discs (Guangzhou 1991a: 75, 179, 216) (Figure 9.8). From this arrangement, the four columns of *bi* discs seem to act as protection for the box in the center, while the two jade discs placed at the bottom instead of on top of the ceramic *bi* discs suggest that they were not meant to be confused with the ceramic discs when displayed. However, the presence of jade discs appears to offer and secure the efficacy of the non-jade discs so as to defend the box as well as the pills, a highly important item for the tomb owner to ward against attacks from evil spirits and to ensure they could continue to be consumed in the afterlife. A similar situation occurs in the head compartment, where seven large jade *bi* discs were placed on the top of a lacquer box that contained pearls (Guangzhou 1991a: 179). These *bi* discs may have served as protection for the deceased as well as to denote a container of significant objects, the pearls, against external attacks in the tomb. In the western chamber of the tomb, five glass *bi* discs were mingled with three jade *bi* discs and were placed in proximity to a pile of five-colored stones, lead pellets, three bronze incense burners, and two bronze mortars and pestles (Guangzhou 1991a: 72–3, 75, 82, 118, 133, 141, fig. 51). Such mortars and pestles were used for grinding medicines and the five-colored stones and lead pellets

were probably thought to be elixirs (related discussions cf. Wang Fang 2007). A reference recorded in the biography of Canggong (仓公列传) of *Shiji*, “Sui, the attending doctor of King of Qi, was sick, then he alchemized a five-colored stone and took it … (齐王侍医遂病，自练五石服之…),” confirms such a practice. In addition, there is evidence that the inhaling of burning incense was related to the practice of seeking longevity (Hui 2008). All these items interred together have a close connection to contemporary belief about immortality. The presence of the jade discs among them on the one hand insured the ability to empower even glass and ceramic discs, while on the other hand, insured that the entire collection could serve the purpose of pursuing immortality forever.

A further indication of the belief that jade *bi* discs or the material jade itself could protect the bodies of the deceased is found in the use of jade discs cut up into small plaques or inlays for jade suits or pillows. For example, the tombs of the king of Nanyue in Guangzhou (Guangzhou 1991a: 364, fig. 215), of the king of Chu (楚王) at Beidongshan (北洞山) in Xuzhou, Jiangsu (Xuzhou 2003: plate 64) and of the king of Dian (滇王) in Puning Shizhaishan (普宁石寨山), Yunnan (云南) (Gu 2005: 77), both have some jade suit plaques that were cut from jade discs. In the tomb of Dou Wan (窦綬) at Hebei Mancheng (满城) (Zhongguo 1980: fig. 177) and a tomb at Houloushan (后楼山) in Xuzhou (Zhongguo 2005: 332–5), jade discs were cut to form inlays for pillows. These two objects, jade suits and pillows, shrouded the body and raised the head of the dead. It is likely that they were thought to be able to extend protection to the dead who wore or used them, even though they were not in complete *bi* disc form. The disc parts used in jade suits or pillows were probably old pieces and not new ones (Rawson 1995: 256). Considering the context of the tomb of the king of Nanyue and the tomb of Dou Wan, many different jade discs were used, and some were selected to be cut up and become parts of the pillows or jade suits rather than keeping the disc intact. Thus, jade as a material was prioritized over the form of a *bi* disc for the objects placed closest to the deceased.

Even small numbers of jade discs contained in a cluster of non-jade discs provided significant empowerment for objects in the tomb. These mixed collections suggest that the non-jade *bi* discs were not sufficient to offer protection on their own. This is further proven by the huge difference in the number of jade vs. non-jade *bi* discs used in the burial context. It took far fewer jade discs than the others to insure protection. Altogether, the situations reinforce the interpretation that jade was the most potent defense against attack in the afterlife, a task that the form of the *bi* disc alone could not provide.

IMAGERY AS REPRESENTATION: THE SEPARATED FORM

The intact tomb of Lady Dai at Mawangdui is a special case in that it did not hold any jade discs; even the disc placed closest to the tomb owner that was hung from the top of the head panel of the inner coffin was made of lacquer



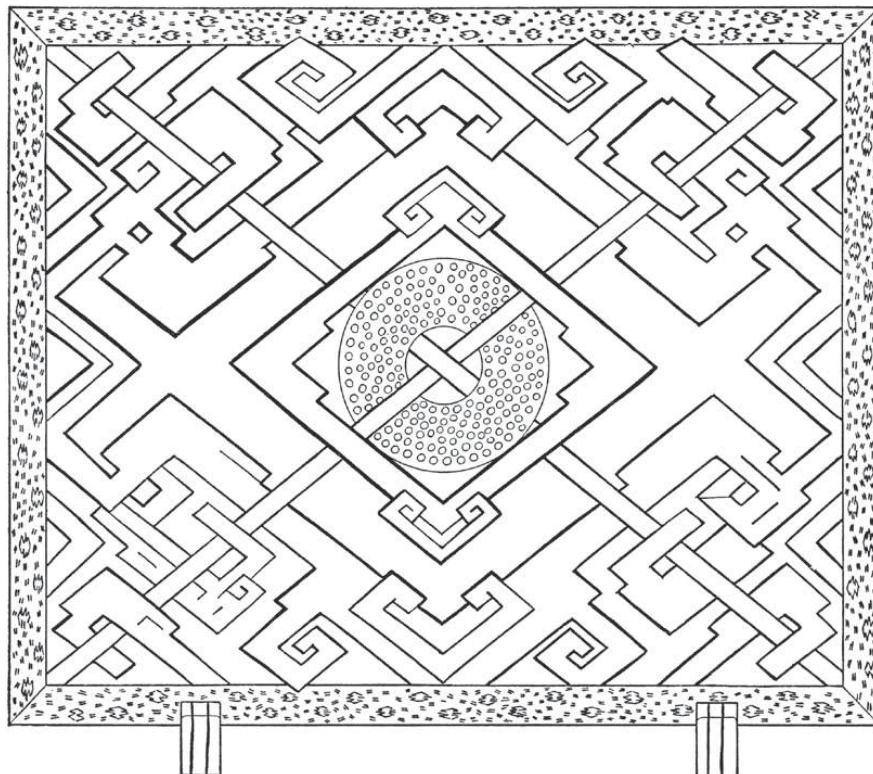
9.9. The pictorial image of *bi* disc on the southern panel of the coffin from the tomb of Lady Dai at Mawangdui, Hunan province. (Line drawing from Hunan 1973a: fig. 24.)

(Hunan 1972: plate 10, 12; Hunan 1973a: 36–7, fig. 36). Indeed the other two tombs in the same region, the tomb of Marquis Dai at Mawangdui and the tomb of the king of Changsha at Shazitang, only have one jade item placed close to the deceased (Figure 9.3). In fact, these three tombs yielded very few pieces of jade or were even absent of jade. But the rich and luxuriant objects buried in these elite tombs and some other very modest graves in the region which also yielded jade discs indicate that neither economic considerations nor shortage of jade material in the region were the primary reason for the absence of jade *bi* discs as well as jade objects in these nobles' tombs (Hubei 1976; Changsha 1986). Another possibility is that the region did not have such a strong belief in the supernatural qualities of jade as did the eastern part of the state at that time. This is demonstrated in the way they preserved the corpses in the tomb of Lady Dai and son of Marquis Dai, where both bodies were covered with multiple layers of excellent garments instead of layers of jade (Hunan 1973a: 28–31; Hunan 2004: 41–2). In addition, the same tomb adopted peach wood figurines rather than jade to ward off evil – thirty-six peach wood

figurines were placed between the coffins and on the inner coffin to ward off evil (Hunan 1973a: 100–1). Meanwhile, in tomb no. 3 of Marquis Dai's son at Mawangdui, two peach wood figurines were also found between the inner coffin and middle coffin (Hunan 2004: 179). A written reference to this practice can be found in the Qin bamboo slips called *rishu* (日书) that were excavated at Shuihudi (睡虎地), Hubei province. They mention that "peach wood" and white stones could ward off evil (Liu Lexian 1994: 257).

In addition, a divergence between the form of *bi* disc and its original jade material may perhaps have already occurred in the Warring States period. Several modest tombs (with no jade objects) in Hubei and Hunan included *bi* discs made of alternative materials. For example, a Warring States tomb no. 7 and Qin tomb no. 9 at Shuihudi, in Yunmeng (云梦), Hubei province, yielded two and four wooden *bi* discs respectively. They were painted and lacquered on one side with floral or geometrical patterns, typical motifs on lacquerware at that time (Yunmeng 1981: 55–7). In addition, three *ling chuang* (苓床), a wooden board for holding the deceased, were placed on the bottom of the coffin and were engraved with a *bi* disc motif as well as simplified dragon openwork patterns. These were unearthed in small tombs in Changde (常德) and at Changsha in Hunan province (Hunan 1963a: 169; Zhongguo 1957: 22, 63). By looking at these rather different choices of materials, decoration, and method of presentation for the *bi* disc, we see no attempt in these cases to maintain the appearance of jade. These are early examples of the form of *bi* discs and are disconnected from the original jade material in this southern China location. Therefore, the link between jade and *bi* discs in the southern region was not as substantial as it was in the eastern areas.

Even so, the *bi* disc became a necessary item for burials in the area, regardless of rank (for discoveries of *bi* discs from the ordinary burials in the region, cf. Hubei 1976; Changsha 1986; Fu 1999; Yuan Lai 2001). Hanging or placing a *bi* disc at the head of the deceased was a prevalent practice in this southern region that started no later than the Warring States period. Many scholars have offered detailed discussions suggesting that the opening on the disc probably represented a passage leading the soul to ascend to the afterlife in heaven (Loewe 1979: 17–59; Wu 1992; Erickson 2010). Although many ordinary tombs in the southern region during Han times continued to adopt glass or talc as inferior simulations of jade, the high-status tombs developed a very different way to present its presence. In the jade-absent tomb of Lady Dai at Mawangdui, depictions of *bi* discs occurred in different places: on the southern panel of the coffin (Figure 9.9), the funerary banner that covered the inner coffin, and a panel in the northern compartment (Hunan 1973a: 26, 40, 42, 93–4, figs. 24, 38, 89, plates 36, 192) (Figure 9.10). Wu Hung suggested that the northern compartment was a setting that served as the afterlife dwelling space for Lady Dai, and that this panel placed at the far west in this space signified



9.10. Pictorial image of *bi* disc on a panel from the tomb of Lady Dai at Mawangdui, Hunan province. (Line drawing from Hunan 1973a: 94, fig. 89.)

the throne for and the presence of Lady Dai (Wu 2011: 59–61). Likewise, in another jade-absent noble tomb of Marquis Dai's son at Mawangdui, images of *bi* discs were also depicted on the funerary banner and a panel in the northern compartment (Hunan 2004: 106–7, 157, 160, figs. 31, 75). The nearby tomb at Shazitang also has paintings of *bi* discs on the northern panel and on the cover of the outer coffin (Hunan 1963b: 15, plate 1.1, 3, color plate) (Figure 9.11).

These pictorial images of *bi* discs were usually presented in a scene showing a pair of mythical animals, such as dragons, passing through a suspended disc. The meaning of this iconography is still subject to debate, but it perhaps refers to the transition of the soul of the deceased to an eternal otherworld (Erickson 2010; Loewe 1979: 17–59; Wu 1992). Undeniably, this choice of pictorial presentation of *bi* discs appeared repeatedly on the objects that were placed in close proximity to the corpses. On the one hand that suggests that the region did not have as strong a belief in the effective preservative quality of jade as did the rest of the region, while on the other hand it demonstrates that the nobles of this region believed that the mere image of a *bi* disc was efficacious and gradually became a more preferable way to illustrate their belief that the object could protect and assist the tomb owners in the afterlife (Thorp 1979: 79; Lin 2004: 328).



9.11. The pictorial image of *bi* disc on the northern panel of the coffin, at the tomb of the king of Changsha at Shazitang, Hunan province. (Drawing from Hunan 1963b: color plate.)

CONCLUSION

The *bi* disc was replicated extensively in tombs and in a wide variety of formats of various ranking individuals during the Western Han. The lineage of the object in the period is long. Looking at different types of *bi* discs and their presentation, particularly in elite burial contexts, we have seen that the representation of the form and the material of its manufacture were not necessarily connected.

Prior to the Western Han, jade and the *bi* disc form generally maintained a very strong association, although some modest tombs in south China began to use glass or talc to substitute for jade during the Warring States period. In this case, the choice was apparently driven by economic necessity by substituting a material that retained qualities of jade. By the Western Han, beliefs about the form and material diverged and, therefore, their trajectories became more complex.

In Western Han mountain tombs in the eastern regions, jade was continuously in favor with the elite and was believed to be the most potent material

to protect the dead body. Jade was selected for manufacture of *bi* discs used to surround the deceased in eastern China from as early as the Liangzhu of the late Neolithic. This practice sustained the connection between the material and the circular form of the *bi* disc. Eastern Han scholar Zheng Xuan (郑玄) added these footnotes to the statements about *bi* discs from the *Rites of the Zhou*: “the *bi* disc is ring-shaped to represent heaven (璧圜象天);” and “(the burial) including a *bi* disc and *cong* communicated with heaven and earth (疏璧琮者，通于天地).” This text probably reflected a contemporary perception about the *bi* disc, particularly in a burial context. Although ceramic or glass *bi* discs were adopted as substitutes in the Western Han nobles’ burials, their efficacy seems not to be trusted and thus they were intermingled with jade discs, apparently to secure their potency as the *bi* discs placed nearest to the deceased were all made of jade. In some cases, the form of the *bi* disc was even forsaken and was cut into other shapes to fit as inlays for pillows or for rectangular pieces for jade suits. In the context of serving as protection for the dead body in the mountain tombs, jade use dominated and determined the trajectory of the form of discs and also the object itself in that area.

The *bi* disc also could act as a symbol of wealth, and those made of inferior materials such as wood or clay were generally mass produced regardless of how different they were in quality as compared to jade. They were presented as *mingqi* and stored in the tomb as part of the owners’ property to be available for his/her afterlife enjoyment. These non-jade discs are usually roughly made, and many of them merely imitated the disc shape and ignored the detailed patterns of the originals. In this context, the significance of the object was manifest in the form of the disc, not the material of manufacture.

In the elite tombs of the former Chu area, *bi* discs followed a very different development that made it distinct from other jade objects; its form gradually separated from the materiality of jade and became part of elaborate paintings on coffins, funerary banners, and so forth. Indeed, the rich content and belief about the afterlife embedded in the *bi* disc form was revealed in pictorial form. Additionally, the *bi* disc form further emerged as a common and significant motif in scenes in burials across a broad region, in the form of mural paintings and engravings on stone or bricks. It enjoyed continued favor throughout Han times (cf. Zhongguo 2000: 4.94, 5.84–5, 116–17; Hayashi 1991: 338, 355; Pearlstein 2005; Wu 1989: 104, 240).

In the case of the *bi* discs discussed, this biographical study has incorporated the concept of materiality and looked at the physical shape and the material qualities of the object in an effort to discern its social value (Meskell 2004: 13–17; Gilchrist 2013: 171). A lateral view of the lineage of the *bi* disc has simultaneously revealed trajectories for both the material and its shape. This approach has allowed us to explore hitherto unacknowledged and oversimplified

understandings of the object in the context of burial, particularly in the Western Han when the *bi* disc was ubiquitously, if variously, used.

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CROSSING THE TAIWAN STRAIT: CONTEXTUALIZING AND RE-CONTEXTUALIZING TAIWANESE ABORIGINAL OBJECTS (1895–1980)

Hui Du

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, the “Exhibition of Taiwan Ethnic Minorities’ History & Culture” (台湾少数民族历史与文化展) was held in the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing in an effort by the government to introduce the history and culture of Taiwanese aboriginal groups to the public in mainland China. In order to display “authentic” Taiwanese aboriginal culture and promote a relationship across the Taiwan Strait (台湾海峡), the museum invited aboriginal staff members from Taiwan to participate in the exhibition, and chose only artifacts and photos to display from Taiwan sources. The exhibition represented the history, culture and daily life of about fourteen of these groups dating from the Dutch Occupation Period (1624–62) to modern times. The exhibition was intended to depict a harmonious multicultural image. This large-scale exhibition was meant to strengthen peaceful cross-Straits ties, as it was a first attempt to invite Taiwan aborigines to engage in museum practice at an official level. Metaphorically, the exhibit included Taiwan aborigines as important members of the “Chinese ethnic family” in order to suit the multinational political framework of the mainland of China.

Nowadays, museums are viewed as contested spaces, and in the case of the mainland of China and Taiwan, aboriginal groups in Taiwan that sought extended civil rights in the 1980s also questioned museum practices and sought to tell stories about themselves in their own voices in museums. On

both sides of the Taiwan Strait, museums took an active part in reconsidering their function as a space of negotiation. Here I will investigate how Taiwanese aboriginal history was narrated and by whom before the 1980s, especially from 1895 to 1980. Since 1895, after Japan occupied the island, the Taiwan Strait became an impassable gulf in an ideological context made up of political need and nation-state identity construction. Therefore, my interest here is to examine the politicized nature of exhibiting Taiwanese aboriginal objects in museums both on the mainland of China and in Taiwan. This will, hopefully, expose the power and authority of museums in the construction of object biographies and their life histories.

OBJECT, MUSEUM AND NARRATIVE

I will discuss Taiwanese aboriginal objects¹ conceptually as material culture, but do not focus on typology or function. The manner in which these objects were preserved and displayed in museums will be seen as a stage of their social life whose biography can be written. Samuel J. M. M. Alberti pointed out that the life of a museum object has three phases (2005: 561). The first phase is the movement of objects from their place of manufacture or development through their collection and deposit in the museum. The second phase takes place when the object is classified, analyzed and displayed as a collection. And the final phase concerns visitor experience and the nature of the relationship between the object and its viewer. This chapter pays attention to the second phase and discusses exhibition logic and strategies used in the museum spaces that displayed Taiwanese aboriginal objects.

Museums have never been neutral institutions and their “one-way conversation” was challenged in the 1960s and 1970s (McLean 1999). In the 1980s, Peter Vergo pointed out, for instance, that “old museology” ignored the purpose of the museum (Vergo 1989: 3). Sharon Macdonald (2006: 5) suggested that it is necessary to understand the museum as a cultural form “best seen as a product of the coming together of a heady mix of partially connected motivation and concerns.” Foucault’s arguments about politics and knowledge brought more disputes about the political nature of museums. Firstly, he argued that the political intention of the institution necessarily involved the display and the creation of knowledge about objects. Sharon Macdonald suggested that scientific displays “are never, and have never been, just representations of uncontested facts” and “they always have cultural, social and political implications” (1998: 1). Luke argued that the power of this “knowledge” is its articulation of political contradictions and ideological pressures in exhibitions (2002: xiv). Secondly, the museum exhibition is a representational system and narrative with a motive to persuade visitors to accept the world of others (Lidchi 1997). Thirdly, the exhibition is the narrative of others, and the museum is a heterotopic

space containing all times, ages, forms and tastes (Foucault 1998: 175–85; Fyfe 2006: 35).

Museums with national or ethnic identity concerns always use “technological magic,” through which specific artifacts or ways of arrangement (Macdonald 2003) articulate political motivation. These strategies create in the museum a place of timeless space, as Beth Lord claims, so that museums can and do articulate the difference between things and words, objects and concepts (2006: 3–5). Ethnographic museums, for instance, appropriate exotic things, facts and meanings that create a fictional material world of another culture and the past (Clifford 1988: 238–41). In such a timeless space, material objects, texts, images and models construct a representational system and describe the world and other cultures in a new order. An exhibition uses rhetorical expressions to produce meanings about ethnographical objects. Henrietta Lidchi calls this practice the “poetics of exhibiting,” or the production of meaning through the internal ordering and conjugation of separate but related components of an exhibition (1997: 168). On some occasions, poetical strategies intertwine with and strengthen the political nature of the exhibition as, likewise, political intentions affect the selection of rhetorical strategies.

Museums that display Taiwanese aboriginal objects on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have become contested spaces of ideological conflict fraught with tensions between power and knowledge, political ideas, nation-state identity construction and ethnic consciousness. By crossing the Strait, Taiwanese aboriginal objects constructed a bridge between nations and made Taiwan aborigines and their culture visible. The objects accrued ideological significance that changed according to their contextualization and re-contextualization in the colonial and post-colonial periods. The notion of “technological magic” brought to museum contexts more controversial issues about the intertwined relations between ideology and academic ambitions that stood behind the exhibition of Taiwanese aboriginal material culture.

EMPIRE, OBJECTS AND JAPANESE COLONIAL DISCOURSES (1895–1945)

Taiwan, the island, lies on the western edge of the Pacific Ocean and southeast coast of mainland China, and has been regarded as a crossroad of commerce connecting Europe, America, East Asia and Southeast Asia. In 1895, the Qing government was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War, signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki and ceded the Pescadores Islands and Taiwan to Japan. This was their first overseas colony and Japan instantly became the only non-Western colonial empire in the Far East. The period from 1895 to 1945 was also termed the Japanese Occupation Period. As Mark Peattie has suggested, Japan emerged as a colonial power in the 1890s and strove to emulate Western organizational models (1994: 6), technology

and even schools, hospitals, museums and other institutional units that they thought symbolized civilization and a modern nation. In order to conquer and rule the new colony, the Japanese government enforced clear colonial rule-making and stringently controlled exploration, investigation or resource exploitation in the interior of Taiwan. According to official island statistics, there were about sixty foreigners living in Taiwan in 1895 and the number decreased in the following years (*Taiwan Historica* 1994: 14, 41–4). All foreign travelers needed to make their destinations clear and were forbidden to go to “dangerous” areas where indigenous people lived (McGovern 1922: 33; *Taiwan Historica* 1994: 322).

Indeed, Japanese authorities gradually monopolized administrative management, resource exploitation and academic activities after the war, and fully realized the economic, political and cultural potential of Taiwan. Eastern Taiwan, especially, was considered a treasure of natural resources and academic research. At the beginning of the twentieth century, academic research coexisted with colonial management, and systematic investigations and collecting of aboriginal objects was conducted from official and non-official levels. Gotō Shinpei, the head of civilian affairs, pointed out that systematic scientific investigation was necessary in order to maintain colonial management (Zheng 2005: 45), thus allowing the government to encourage intellectuals from different disciplines to participate and support academic expeditions. From another point of view, many scholars such as the anthropologist Torii Ryuzo (鸟居龙藏) advocated that researchers take on the operation of a new colony as their own responsibility in order to discover academic truths and make “Taiwan become the Japanese academy’s domain” (Torii 1897: 116–19; 1911: 2). With military conquests and administrative authorization, investigators could go deep into every aboriginal tribal village, collect demographic information, record physical characteristics, customs and social structures, as well as through exchange or purchase collect aboriginal objects including weapons, garments, ornaments, utensils, musical and ritual instruments (Police Bureau of Taiwan Governor-General 1997: 25–7, 46). In what was considered a “civilizing” project, old customs were transformed, headhunting and ritual were forbidden and innumerable objects were replaced with modern commodities and preserved in official or private repositories and academic institutions, all within several decades.

Anthropological research in eastern Taiwan, for instance, was at the time the ideal “museum of ethnology” (Torii 1911: 2), and aboriginal objects became the material proof of truth about the groups. Most often, these ideas were represented collectively in the context of “aboriginal object display.” Here, the case of the Taiwan Governor Museum (台湾总督府博物馆) display will illustrate the relationship between the empire, aboriginal objects and the colonial narrative.

The Taiwan Governor Museum in Taipei opened to the public in 1908 and was the first modern museum in Taiwan. It became the instrument that introduced natural, historical and ethnographical truths and achievements of colonial management (Mori 1999: 268). More than ten thousand visitors from Taiwan, Japan and other countries were attracted there, and some Japanese citizens donated their collections to the museum (*Chinese Taiwan Daily News*, Dec. 13, 1908; Dec. 27, 1908; Dec. 9, 1909; May 6, 1910; Apr. 18, 1911). The collection of about 12,723 specimens was divided into categories including geology, plants, animals, humankind (indigenous people), history, agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, minerals, crafts and commerce (*Taiwan Times*, March 1910). In 1915, the number had increased to 23,268, and aboriginal objects alone had increased from about 700 to 1,932 items (Taiwan Governor Museum 1939: 86; Li 1999: 280). The section of History and Humankind (Indigenous People) was designed by anthropologist Ino Kanori (伊能嘉矩) and Mori Ushinosuke (森丑之助) separately, and was aimed at introducing “the truth about the new territory” and at contributing to academic research (*Chinese Taiwan Daily News*, April 25, 1907). The ethnographic and historical display constructed new images of Taiwan cultures as well as justified Japanese occupation.

The museum had five sections comprising animals, minerals, history, Taiwanese aboriginal folk customs and South Sea folk customs. In 1923, Crown Prince Hirohito (裕仁皇太子) visited this new colony and the Taiwan Governor Museum. This symbolic event legalized the authority and highly praised the achievements of managing Taiwan. At the same time, the museum space and exhibitions of aboriginal objects could be understood by following Crown Prince Hirohito’s footsteps.

The indigenous nation exhibition room is located on the second floor on the east side. The curator explained the distribution map of linguistic groups and indigenous peoples of Taiwan, introduced other similar linguistic systems around the world, compared their differences and similarities, and explained its position from a linguistic perspective. Folk artifacts of the Ami, Yami, Bunun, Tsou, Atayal and Paiwan, including exhibits of weaving technology and cloth, were presented. Full-scale dioramas displayed the physical traits and customs of the aborigines.

The curator led the way to the South Seas showroom on the first floor on the west side, and explained folk artifacts from the South Seas islands, Java, Borneo and Philippines.

Then they entered the History showroom on the east side and visited stone tools found on this island. The curator explained the distribution map of prehistoric sites, and showed relics of the Dutch and Chinese period of occupation and ancient periods. (Taiwan Governor Museum, 1939: 348)

The section of the museum on Taiwanese aboriginal folklife exhibited weapons, ceramics, pipes, costumes, building models, musical instruments and ritual items from aboriginal groups. These were frozen in the museum cases and became proof of the dying of traditional ways. Beyond the museum, the social structure and customs of these peoples were changing drastically and innumerable commodities symbolizing their modernization replaced traditional items under the auspices of civilizing projects. On the other hand, these ethnographic objects systematically constructed knowledge about aborigines, and underscored the academic interests and political intentions of the colonists. The items were classified and arranged according to function and ethnic group, including the Ami, Yami, Bunun, Tsou, Atayal, Paiwan and Saisiat. Before and during the early twentieth century, these objects collected from aboriginal groups were simply classified as products of the “hill tribes,” “savages of Formosa” or just “Taiwan.” In order to manage the new colony and to promote academic development, large-scale investigations were conducted by official and semi-official institutions and universities. That systematically collected information was thought to create a rational, scientific space.

The classification system of Taiwanese aboriginal objects was strengthened by linguistic and anthropological observations. The language distribution map was thought to provide powerful evidence of their ethnic classification system that eventually became the basis for arranging objects. A notable part of the exhibition were the dioramas that enacted traditional customs of different groups and were made to highlight physical anthropological and cultural characteristics such as the face tattooing of the Atayal, body tattooing of the Paiwan or gestures of pottery making, weaving and wood carving. As illustrations in the *Introduction to the Taiwan Governor Museum* (1926: 61) indicate, the museum represented a whole range of images of the lifeways of indigenous people. This anthropologically derived system of knowledge about Taiwan and its inhabitants was expected to introduce to the public the “truth” about the new colony.

The museum also paid attention to the indigenous material culture in Southeast Asia and collected 1,239 folk items from Java, Borneo, the Philippines and other islands. The section introduced the history, religion and race of inhabitants in this area, and emphasized the importance of collecting, displaying and researching culture and race. On the one hand, the academic interest focused on exploring the cultural connections between indigenous people in Taiwan and the South Seas. Japanese scholars found similarities in languages, customs and material culture, and some asserted that the two areas had the same cultural origin. On the other hand, the exhibition provided data or specimens that linked Taiwan to the South Seas culturally and thus to Japan’s commercial and labor market development and the military expansion of their

colonial power. The museum was charged with collecting and displaying these materials. As the *Introduction to the Taiwan Governor Museum* clarified:

The South Seas should be especially considered as part of the mission of the museum because the development of South Seas is essential to our future organization. Therefore, it is necessary to understand it, and then make the dream of expanding relevant facilities come true in the future. (Taiwan Governor Museum, 1939: 4)

The motivation behind the academic discourse for colonial rule and expansion is obvious. Knowledge about aborigines and objects collected from indigenous peoples exposed the achievements of their colonial rule. In the museum, five hundred guns confiscated from “untamed” Gogan people were displayed. These guns acted as trophies and signified that the most rebellious tribes in Taiwan had been conquered by the Japanese government. It mattered not, therefore, if Japanese officers or researchers went deep into the interior to observe, record and collect.

Indigenous peoples and their cultures, however, were excluded from the narrative of recorded history and civilization. Taiwanese aboriginal objects were removed from their original contexts, displayed in a new order and given meanings so as to construct a cultural history of Taiwan, and even Japan, in the museum – that timeless space. The display in the History section followed the annalistic order from the reign of Emperor Yu (禹) four thousand years ago, to the period of Japanese occupation. An eight-part history was devised: the prehistoric period, Takasago period (高砂时代) (thirteenth to sixteenth century), Dutch and Spanish period of occupation (1624–62), period of the reign under the Zheng family (郑氏时代) (1662–83), period of the reign under the Qing (清领时代) (1683–1895), the start of the Japanese occupation, the Japanese occupation and the collection of Taiwan folk customs (Li 2011).

Taiwanese aboriginal culture was placed at one end of the linear historical narrative. Shell-bead garments and ornaments of the Atayal, ceramics of the Ami and Bunun and farm implements were displayed with prehistoric stone tools (see Figure 10.1). Indigenous artifacts were selected carefully and viewed as “living proof” to support the inference that aboriginal culture was the origin of Taiwan culture. Some Japanese historians proposed that the local shell-bead products coincided with customs of shell and barkcloth in legend. And similarities between pottery and stone tool types with archaeological findings of the Yuanshan site (圆山遗址) in Taiwan and archaeological sites in southeast China, for instance, led researchers to believe that Stone Age peoples were the ancestors of Taiwanese aborigines, and thereby they were thought to have cultural connections with mainland China. The *Introduction to the Taiwan Governor Museum* stated, “Taiwan is the new territory of Japan, but the history and art have close connections to China, the oldest nation in East Asia” (Taiwan Governor Museum 1926: 61). This material evidence could help to “locate the cultural origins of East Asia in Taiwan” (National Taiwan Museum 2009: 72).

The First Showcase

Polished stone shovel Chipped stone shovel Stone tools specimens Stone sinker Spindle from ancient times Archaeological site distribution map Patterns of pottery found in Taiwan Map of the four seas in the Tribute of Yu (禹貢四海圖) (Yugong Sihai tu) Farm implements used by indigenous people Ceramics of the Bunun Ceramics of the Ami	Exhibit Items <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 45%;">Shell-bead garments and ornaments</td><td style="width: 45%;">Geographical evolution map of Taiwan</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Image of shell-bead making</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Sword belt with shell decoration</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Ceramics in Taiwan</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Bones</td></tr> </table>	Shell-bead garments and ornaments	Geographical evolution map of Taiwan		Image of shell-bead making		Sword belt with shell decoration		Ceramics in Taiwan		Bones	Shell-bead cloth of the Atayal Shell-bead skirt Shell-bead puttee Shell-bead ornaments of the Tsou Shell-bead ornaments Shell-bead ornaments of the Paiwan
Shell-bead garments and ornaments	Geographical evolution map of Taiwan											
	Image of shell-bead making											
	Sword belt with shell decoration											
	Ceramics in Taiwan											
	Bones											

10.1. Sources from Taiwan Governor Museum (1932). (Provided by the National Taiwan Museum.)

The recorded history at the other end of the linear narrative was represented by historical items, official documents, letters, maps and other images from different periods, which depicted a fluid history of this island exploited and ruled by the Qing, Dutch, Spanish and Japanese. The strategy behind the exhibition emphasized the legitimacy of Japanese colonial management again. At the same time, the exhibit designer tried to intensify the link between Japan and Taiwan. The researcher Li Zining (李子寧) compared different versions of the exhibition guide for the History section of the museum from 1932 to 1943. He showed that the collection reflected earlier contact between Japan and Taiwan during the Takasago period where items increased from four to eight, but for the Qing the display decreased from six to four items and thereby showed their military defeat (Li Zining 2011: 195). More than that, the rhetoric of the narrative also was used to reconstruct Japanese history and represent the landscape of races in the colonial period. In 1903, a Japanese industrial exposition was held in Osaka and played an active role in introducing Japanese colonies and “backward nations” to the public. The exhibition was designed around six sub-topics: People in the Stone Age, Emishi Tribes (蝦夷部落), Ryukyuan Tribes (琉球人部族), Taiwan Indigenous Tribes (台灣原住民部族), Ancient Japanese Races (上古日本种族) and Modern Japanese Races

(现代日本种族) (Hu 1998: 52). Taiwanese aborigines, Emishi and Ryukyuan were juxtaposed within the Japanese cultural and historical framework.

Such “technological magic” legalized the Japanese government’s management of Taiwan. Japan established an identity as the legitimate ruler of this island following the rule of the Dutch and Spanish, the Zheng family and the Qing government. For the Japanese government, the Qing government was just one of a string of rulers, thus showing that Taiwan did not belong to any particular country. The Japanese museum curators re-established a local place for Taiwan within Japanese history through exhibiting strategies. Taiwanese aboriginal culture, as the basis of Taiwanese history, was placed at the beginning of lineal Japanese history, which had a history as long as that of mainland China. By using such an exhibition narrative, Japan rebuilt its own account of the past by including Taiwanese aboriginal culture history in the narrative of Japanese history and culture.

NATION, BORDERLAND AND THE ANTI-COLONIAL NARRATIVE IN MAINLAND CHINA (1895–1945)

On the other side of the Taiwan Strait, defeat in the Sino-Japanese War shocked the entire country, while at the same time in the early twentieth century, China was becoming a modern nation and was coming to the end of the last imperial dynasty. Practices of collecting and exhibiting Taiwanese aboriginal objects in this period were conducted with a patriotic, anti-colonial and nationalist passion. Taiwanese aboriginal collections became the medium that introduced this ceded territory, and aroused the Chinese public to fight against military invasion and colonialism. These objects, along with other ethnic objects, were displayed in order to confront the Japanese monopolistic narrative and to construct nation-state identity. Because of the war there are limited materials extant and so we do not know much about exhibiting Taiwanese aboriginal objects during that period. However, it is helpful to examine the meanings of ethnic objects and collection practices in the wider context of patriotism, nationalism, anti-colonialism, borderland and ethnic group studies in the late nineteenth century to 1945.

The Opium War between 1840 and 1860, the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, the war of 1900 launched by the Eight-Nation Allied Forces and imperialist infiltration into their borderlands made the Chinese realize the danger of national subjugation. The Republic of China’s followers and intellectuals devoted to exploring the road to national salvation advocated that they “rescue the nation and keep the race” by observing the experiences of European countries, America and Japan. The Provisional President, Sun Yatsen (孙中山), stated that “the evolution in Europe and America relies on three principles of nationalism, democracy and people’s livelihood” (Sun 1905: 288). Nationalism

was the fundamental principle that unified resistance to imperial power. Sun Yatsen's nationalist idea of "unifying five nationalities" (Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan) (汉、满、蒙、回、藏) replaced the "Hua-Yi" (华夷) (Sino-barbarian) dichotomy. That principle regarded peoples who inhabited the borderlands far from central royal power as barbarians and beyond their civilizing influence. His idea of combining nationalities into a single Chinese nation (中华民族) established a completely new nation state.

Since the 1920s, Chinese ethnological investigations and research has been conducted under the idea of a single nation state, nationalism and patriotism, and aimed to resist foreign aggression, rescue the nation and then build a Chinese ethnological system. A series of ethnographical investigations were held in the southwestern, northwestern and northeastern borderland of China. However, because of strict Japanese control and inner frontier crisis, Taiwan, as Japanese colony, was paid no more attention until Lin Huixiang's investigation in 1929 and 1935.

When Japan occupied Taiwan, all ships and persons from the mainland were forbidden to go to Taiwan without official Japanese permission (*Taiwan Historica* 1994: 346). Lin Huixiang made his first investigation in 1929 when he returned to Taiwan to attend his father's funeral. He entered this island successfully, and traveled along the west coast to visit the Melan, Xingang, Toa Mabakut, Tipun and Derangguan and collected 221 ethnographic objects, including garments, ornaments, weapons, wooden artifacts, ritual objects, boats, 104 stone tools and 22 ceramic pieces (Lin 1991: 41–74). In 1935, Lin Huixiang under the pretense of being a teacher went to Taiwan again to collect aboriginal objects in order to enrich the collection of the Xiamen Anthropological Museum (厦门人类学陈列所) (Lin 1954: 8). He was questioned about his political intentions and finished the collecting under the supervision of officials. He collected dozens of ethnographic objects, about eighty stone tools and three ceramic pieces (Lin 1981: 179). Lin Huixiang's investigations have been seen as the beginning of Taiwanese aboriginal studies in Chinese academia, as he considered the ethnic origin of Taiwanese aborigines and cultural connections among groups in Taiwan, southeastern China and Southeast Asia.

Taiwanese aboriginal objects and archaeological specimens collected by Lin Huixiang were preserved in his private showroom, which was expanded into the Xiamen Anthropological Museum (厦门人类陈列所) in 1935, and the Ethnological Museum established by the School of Humanities of Xiamen University. The *Xiamen University Weekly* (厦大周刊) discussed the collections in the two museums.

It (Xiamen Anthropological Museum) was founded by anthropology professor Lin Huixiang and Singaporean school inspector Chen Yusong (陈育崧) ... The total includes 214 types of specimens and more than 300 items ... However, types of specimens in the Xiamen Anthropological

Museum are fewer than those in the Ethnological Museum. All items are ethnological objects and can explain the origin and evolution of human culture. Specimens from the South Seas were purchased by Chen Yusong, and specimens from Taiwan native tribes were purchased by Lin Huixiang ... (Wu 2007: 770)

The two museums collaborated and held an exhibition in 1936, which aimed to introduce Taiwan culture, and to provide a socio-educational function. The collection was divided into three categories: antique (including burial objects, coins, antiques, oracle bones etc.), ethnological specimens (including Taiwanese aboriginal objects and others) and folklore materials. The category of Taiwanese aboriginal objects displayed weapons, artifacts, ritual objects, ships, house types, prehistoric relics and diagrams of the evolution of human beings and culture (Xiamen University 1936). It is unfortunate that so few materials are now known that could offer more information about exhibitions in the two museums. At the same time, academic activities and museum operation stagnated with the Japanese invasion of China beginning in 1937. Lin Huixiang took most of the ethnographical objects to the South Seas to escape the war, and parts of the collection in the Ethnological Museum were transferred to National Taiwan University (国立台湾大学).

Nevertheless, Lin Huixiang's practices of investigation and collecting were influential at that time and made Taiwan and Taiwanese aborigines come into public recognition, especially when academic interests turned to the borderlands in western China. Because of limited extant materials, it is difficult to realize the logic of exhibitions at the time, but Lin's motives that guided his practice, which took into account social organization, clearly followed his academic interests and point of view. On the one hand, his practices could be seen as a response to Japanese colonial narratives, as they aroused public anti-colonial passion and tried to break the Japanese academic monopoly. In fact, his practices were explained as part of the framework of nation-state building. As Chen Biao (陈表) (1931) commented, "our party's (Nationalist party) duty is to help all weak nations, especially in an imperialist period we need to strive for autonomous rights and equality." On the other hand, Lin Huixiang was deeply committed to ideas of evolution. He believed that the "raw barbarians" (生番) were extant barbarian nations whose culture simply had a primitive nature. He pointed out that the specimens he collected had two functions: to represent extant barbarian culture; and to testify for the existence of evolution, through exhibiting these simple cultures within the context of human evolutionary history.

THE UNSETTLED BRIDGE: INTERACTION BETWEEN THE MAINLAND AND TAIWAN (1945–1948)

In 1945, the Japanese were defeated in World War II, and the second civil war between the Nationalist Party and Communist Party began on the mainland.

Academic and museum activities did not completely improve in the earlier years of the civil war, but even so a few researchers tried to conduct Taiwan culture studies, and the Chinese government began to take over cultural institutions in Taiwan. On the one hand, Taiwanese aboriginal objects were collected and displayed for the mainland public; and relics from the mainland crossed the strait to introduce Chinese history and culture there. On the other hand, objects from both sides were still being used to construct a Chinese nation-state identity and to cleanse the Japanese colonial narrative. However, the interaction only lasted a short time. The bridge built by displaying material objects collapsed again in 1949.

Practices of collecting and displaying Taiwanese aboriginal objects returned to the Chinese historical and cultural systems of thought in an attempt to introduce and understand each other's cultures. Researcher Jin Zutong (金祖同) felt deeply that the public in mainland China knew little about Taiwan and it was time for Chinese scholars to incorporate Taiwanese aboriginal culture into Chinese history. He argued that former studies about Taiwanese aborigines by Japanese researchers served colonial rule and expansion and so he advocated for fresh research under the new political circumstances (Jin 1948: 3). In 1946 he went to Taiwan with the financial support of the collector Ding Huikang (丁惠康) and bought artifacts from the Japanese who were preparing to evacuate from Taiwan. Jin Zutong traveled around the island for two and a half years recording data about the ethnic distribution, ritual, social systems and body ornament of Taiwanese aborigines. At the same time, he collected various ethnographic objects, which were classified as 1) weapons, such as bows, arrows, shields, spears, daggers and knives; 2) daily utensils, including ceramics, rattan and bamboo articles, plates, cups and combs; 3) garments; 4) wood carvings; and 5) ritual objects (Jin 1948; Wang 1997: 208).

In 1948, Ding Huikang and Jin Zutong held the Taiwanese Gaoshan Nationality Culture Exhibition (台湾高山族文化展览会) in Hangzhou and Shanghai, and introduced Taiwanese aboriginal material culture and social order to the mainland public. At the same time, Lin Huixiang returned to Fujian from the South Seas with his ethnographical objects in 1947. He donated his collection to Xiamen University and held an “anthropological specimen exhibition” on the campus. This exhibition displayed ethnographic objects from Taiwan, South China and Southeast Asia, and historical relics divided into “prehistoric relics from South China and Southeast Asia” and “historical relics found in Quanzhou (泉州)” and “ethnologic specimens” (Wu 2007: 772). The exhibition reflected Lin Huixiang’s interests in cultural and historical connections between Taiwan, South China and Southeast Asia through a study of ethnological and archaeological materials. The two main exhibitions in early postwar times implied that the Japanese colonial and academic monopoly had ended, that the Taiwanese aboriginal peoples had

become members of the “Chinese” nationalities and that aboriginal objects had turned into “ethnic relics.”

In postwar Taiwan in 1945, the National Government appointed Chen Jianshan (陈兼善) as Director of the Taiwan Governor Museum. The main work was to repair the building, count relics and rearrange the collections. The aim of the museum reorganization was to erase the Japanese colonial atmosphere. Relics from the mainland were displayed as well, so as to reestablish cultural integrity, repair broken cultural continuity and rebuild national identity there. Comments in the newspaper revealed such motivations:

... the province was under Japanese poisoned policies during the past fifty years. The gap between Taiwan and motherland made Taiwan compatriots lack understanding of the relationship between Taiwan and the motherland. The histories of the Taiwan and the Mainland are linked and are thought of as branches of the same system. However, during the Japanese occupation that history was obscured. Therefore, the meaning of this exhibition is to introduce historical relics to people in Taiwan, and to expose the long history and splendid shared culture with the motherland, and also to know that the contributions to the world of Chinese inventors are immortal. As for Japan, its culture is mainly stimulated by our country. (Yu 2011: 114)

From 1945 to 1948, Taiwanese aboriginal objects and relics showed that the history and culture of the motherland crossed the Taiwan Strait, and became a bridge to connect both sides and to shake off Japanese colonial narratives imposed on Taiwan. It also made the public in Taiwan and mainland learn about each other, and reconstructed the Taiwan people's identity of a Chinese nation. In addition to the exhibitions on the mainland of China and in the Taiwan Museum, the Ministry of Education organized a Chinese relics exhibition in Taipei, which included bronzewares, ceramics and porcelains, paintings and items for printing. These collections were used to represent the long Chinese history, and to compare Chinese and Japanese cultures, showing Japan as a “branch of Chinese culture” (Lu 1948). The bridge was so unsettled and unstable that it collapsed again in 1949 when the Nationalist Government lost the civil war and moved to Taiwan. Since 1949, both sides of Taiwan Strait have constructed narratives about Taiwanese aboriginal culture, but within different ideological contexts.

MULTI-ETHNIC NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION IN MAINLAND CHINA (1949–80)

The year 1949 was a watershed when the link between nations across the Taiwan Strait was cut off because of two opposing ideologies. Two completely different narratives about Taiwanese aboriginal objects were constructed as a

result. In mainland China, two museum narratives coexisted, one of which was full of ideological color and served the multi-ethnic policy, and another served academic interests based on regional studies in southeastern China. In the following, I will focus on how Taiwanese aboriginal objects were included in nation-state identity construction and entangled relations between ideology, knowledge and the objects themselves.

In 1949 the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded, and a Marxist-Leninist paradigm became the dominant discourse (Wang, Zhang and Hu 1998: 17). Ethnological research that followed European and American traditions was considered as a tool for capitalism, and most ethnologists trained in capitalist countries had to rethink and self-criticize. It is obvious that relations between politics, academic and collecting practices were entangled. Such “ideological remolding” became a precondition for academic research and was significant for consolidating new state power. Lin Huixiang also criticized himself for his unclear political stand, and wrote that “the mistake of no correct class stand and views made me make a clear distinction between the people and the enemy” and “I should place myself at that standpoint of the proletariat to build a socialist, even communist country” (Lin 1956: 32). In the early years after the revolution, Chinese ethnologists faced the necessary reality of changing their minds and thoughts to combine and reconcile the Marxist-Leninist paradigm with ethnological knowledge (Wang, Zhang and Hu 1998: 43).

Therefore, the multi-ethnic policy and historical materialism led all academic and collecting practices to share such an ideological background. In the first twenty years of the PRC ethnologists with Marxist-Leninist ideas took an active part in constructing the new socialist country and that led to investigations and the collection of ethnographic materials in frontier areas in order to build a unifying nationality policy and to establish a new national identity. In the 1950s, the Central Institute for Nationalities (中央民族学院) and ethnic universities were set up to provide higher education along the Marxist-Leninist ethnological model. The government, supported by the ethnologists, realized that although there was limited knowledge about ethnic minorities, they wanted to unify them within the national framework. Ethnologist Fei Xiaotong (费孝通) pointed out what needed to happen – they had to record and identify cultural features of ethnic minorities within the borders of the PRC (Fei 1988: 115–18).

In view of this, a nationwide investigation of regions where such groups lived was organized by the government and lasted eight years from 1956 to 1964. All investigators were charged to collect information about language, social structure, economic life, customs, religion, material culture and art, and museums, universities and research institutions were asked to collect ethnographic objects. Even so, no fieldwork was conducted in Taiwan because of the tense political

situation. Researchers completed their reports, as documented in historical literature and the research of Lin Huixiang. Based on this investigation, fifty-five minority nationalities were identified officially by the government. Taiwanese aborigines were identified as the “Gaoshan nationality,” which included six ethnic groups. After that the systematic multi-ethnic policy was established and Taiwanese aborigines became a member of the family of fifty-six nationalities. In order to introduce and display ethnic cultures in China, museums of nationalities were founded in ethnic regions, and most of them adopted similar exhibition models. Here, I will take the Museum of Ethnic Culture of Minzu University of China as an example to analyze the multi-ethnic narrative behind these exhibitions.

The Central Institute for Nationalities (now Minzu University of China) was found in 1949 in order to research ethnic cultures and train minority cadres. In order to establish ethnology as a discipline, staff from Tsinghua University (清华大学), Yenching University (燕京大学), Peking University (北京大学), the Chinese Academy of Science (中国科学院) and Yunnan University (云南大学) worked and researched in the Central Institute for Nationalities. At the same time, 8,425 items of ethnographic, archaeological and folk artifacts preserved in Tsinghua University were transferred to the Central Institute for Nationalities in 1953. Ethnographic objects totaling 3,516 items came from southwestern China, Taiwan, Mongolia and Tibet and included garments, ornaments, weapons, musical instruments, religious objects and daily utensils (Tsinghua University 1953a). There were 229 Taiwanese aboriginal objects, those that had been collected and donated by Jin Zutong and Ding Huikang in 1949 (Tsinghua University 1953b). These collections were preserved in the specimen room of the Central Institute for Nationalities as teaching tools. Meanwhile, more ethnographic objects of ethnic minorities were collected.

The Central Institute for Nationalities founded an ethnic relic showroom in 1952, and Yang Chengzhi (杨成志) was its first head. According to Yang Chengzhi's record, the showroom preserved 31,465 items, including relics (20,334 items) and pictures (11,131 items). Relics were divided into fifteen categories as instruments of production, local specialities, items of trade and transportation, life utensils, textiles, costumes and ornaments, artifacts, musical instruments, scripts and religious instruments (Yang 1956). Yang Chengzhi spent several years classifying, registering and cataloguing; however, the showroom just provided space to preserve the collections. “These classified collections are put into two hundred wood boxes, which can be arranged systematically in the showcase and scientifically preserved when the conditions allow” (Yang 1956).

These collections from different ethnic groups were regarded as “material culture and life created by the working people.” As Yang Chengzhi said, they provided valuable empirical evidence for ethnologists and historians so they could understand material life from an historical materialist perspective. This

showroom was the only place that preserved the ethnic relics of their multi-ethnic culture in the whole country (Yang 1956). The simple and less systematic exhibition tried to reflect “characteristics of national culture and life, and emphasize contents of the multi-nationality policy and socialism” (Yang 1956). In order to achieve this aim, the Central Institute for Nationalities held ten exhibitions between 1953 and 1956. In the 1980s, the Museum of Ethnic Culture was built and became a space where the fifty-five ethnic minorities’ collections were systematically displayed.

The Museum of Ethnic Culture (中央民族大学民族博物馆) was designed to exhibit material in six sections including the “History of Minzu University of China,” “Garment Culture of Ethnic Minorities in South China,” “Garment Culture of Ethnic Minorities in North China,” “Religion Culture,” “Livelihood Culture” and “Cultural Relics of Ethnic Minorities in Taiwan.” When entering the museum, visitors saw a huge tapestry of fifty-six nationalities symbolizing a harmonious ethnic family. A geographic distribution map of Chinese nationalities was on the side wall. The museum selected elements of clothing, religion and livelihood to showcase each ethnic culture; garments and ornaments were the most numerous. In the section on clothing, Taiwanese aboriginal garments were classified with those from southern China, displayed alongside others to illustrate the colorful and multi-ethnic community that made up the PRC. Shell-bead garments of the Atayal stood out as examples of a unique weaving technique and a great accomplishment by comparison to other garments.

Overall, Taiwanese aboriginal objects were given an important role and were highlighted in the museum. A special exhibition, Cultural Relics of Ethnic Minorities in Taiwan, displayed garments, ornaments, wood carvings, rattan work, ceramics and weapons, and was arranged according to type and function, although the provenance of some objects was inaccurate and labeled with the object’s Chinese-English name and entry date. These displays constructed and fragmented an incomplete, micro-image of Taiwanese aboriginal culture and society, while becoming the official window for the public to understand Taiwan and aborigines. On the one hand, Taiwanese aboriginal objects, along with other ethnic relics, created an image of a multi-ethnic family in China, and played into the political goal of unifying fifty-six nationalities into a national narrative. This unified, multi-ethnic model has been adopted widely by other museums of nationalities in mainland China since the 1950s. On the other hand, with the Taiwanese aboriginal movements, especially the “Name Rectification Campaign” since the 1980s, the colonial term “Gaoshan nationality” was questioned and was replaced by “Taiwanese aborigines.” However, the Museum of Ethnic Culture took neither the Japanese colonial term “Gaoshan nationality” nor the “mountain compatriots” (山胞), a term used by the Nationalist Government in Taiwan, and instead used “Cultural Relics of Ethnic Minorities in Taiwan.” In fact, the term “ethnic minorities” had

already existed within the language of the Chinese nationality narrative, and was found to coincide with the nationality policy in mainland China.

The exhibition model from the Museum of Ethnic Culture was followed by many ethnological museums in the PRC, where their main mission was to introduce ethnic minority cultures and strengthen nationality policy. In the museum, cultures of the fifty-five ethnic minorities were manifest in material objects that were meant to coexist harmoniously. The special exhibition Cultural Relics of Ethnic Minorities in Taiwan emphasized Taiwan ethnic groups as members of the nationalities family, and those objects along with others built and supported the idea of a harmonious multicultural ethnic culture in colorful and peaceful spaces. As the catalogue preface reported:

Ethnic minorities inhabiting Taiwan are collectively named Gaoshan people in the mainland ... These Taiwan ethnic groups were the earliest inhabitants and pioneers on the island. They created splendid cultures with distinctive ethnic characteristics. The cultural relics displayed in this gallery were collected by ethnologists and anthropologists during the 1920s–1930s, as they conducted field research in Taiwan. These relics vividly record the daily life and culture of Gaoshan peoples, preserving their unique aesthetic values and religious beliefs at that time, and are of great value in history, art and academic research.

Besides this strongly politicized exhibition model, another parallel exhibition narrative based on studies of the origin of Chinese nationalities put Taiwanese aborigines into the “Bai Yue” (百越) system (or Hundred Yue) which established a cultural connection between Taiwan, southeastern China and Southeast Asia. This exhibition model could be observed in the Museum of Anthropology at Xiamen University, where it was based on Lin Huixiang’s academic interests and research. Lin Huixiang pointed out that ethnographic museums played an important role in the development of the discipline of anthropology and in displaying worldwide cultures. It is notable that Lin Huixiang tried to adjust the relation between ideology, politics and academic research, the country’s need and personal academic interests.

In the 1930s, Lin Huixiang started to prepare an anthropological museum, but it was not until 1953 that the Museum of Anthropology was founded. He donated all his collections to support the establishment of the museum. In the proposal for setting up the museum that he submitted to the Ministry of Education in 1949, Lin Huixiang elaborated the requirements on three levels. The first was about the value of anthropology in helping to understand the evolution of human culture. It is notable that the name of Museum of Anthropology of Xiamen University translated from the Chinese is the Museum of Human Beings (人类博物馆). Such a title emphasized human history and coincided with his understanding of the discipline of anthropology without intense ideological color. As he mentioned, “anthropology

studies all mankind, not one country or nationality; real anthropologists have no national prejudice, do not agree with narrow nationalism, and advocate racial equality and internationalism” (Lin 1996: 18). His second notion was that emphasis on Marxism-Leninism and historical materialism also came from anthropological thought. Lastly, he discussed the importance of anthropological studies about the South Seas, a focus that helped to establish diplomatic relations with countries of the South Seas and to explore cultural connections between the ancient Yue and Malay. In addition, beginning in the 1930s, Lin Huixiang gradually built up the idea of a “southeastern oceanic culture system,” and applied it to the organization of exhibitions.

Lin Huixiang designed the exhibition in the Museum of Anthropology of Xiamen University that emphasized regional culture in the southeastern coastal area of China, and the cultural links with Fujian, Taiwan and South Seas. The exhibition reflected his thoughts about evolution and regional culture, including anthropology, history, archaeology, art and religion. The exhibition was divided into three main sections. The first section was “The Genesis and Evolution of Human Beings” and showed human evolution from ape to man by displaying models, fossils of animals and Paleolithic stone tools. Fifty models showed the evolution and a life-size model of prehistoric people holding stone axes “represented the world being created through human labor” (Lin 1951: 696). Prehistoric stone tools from Fujian, Taiwan and the South Seas displayed the cultural similarities among these groups and were used to compare them with those from North China.

Collections of the second section from the “historic era” showed “the Genesis and Evolution of Culture” in southeast China. Ceramics and stone tools from the Stone Age found in Fujian, Taiwan and Southeast Asia, oracle bones, bronzes, ancient currency, porcelain, paintings and calligraphic works, weapons, sculptures and boat models from Quanzhou, and stone carvings of ancient Islam displayed cultural characteristics of southeast coastal area of China, and cultural exchange with other areas. And the final section, “National Relics in China and Abroad,” preserved and displayed ethnographic objects from southwestern China, Taiwan, northern China, Southeast Asia, India and Australia. These specimens were classified by function, such as weapons, including “ancient weapons of the Han Chinese people, ancient weapons of Chinese brother nationalities, and ancient weapons of foreign nationalities,” instruments, artifacts, costumes, religious instruments, models of buildings and boats, models of racial features and models of cultural geography (Lin 1951: 698).

The Museum of Anthropology tried to represent a macro cultural model – the southeastern oceanic culture system of China extending to Southeast Asia – one that emphasized especially cultural connections and similarities

among ancient people in southeastern China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia. They did this by displaying archaeological, ethnographic and physical anthropological evidence within the cultural area from the perspective of evolution. In fact, Lin Huixiang had focused on analyzing cultural connections among the three regions since the 1930s, and had conducted a series of archaeological excavations in Fujian province where he also collected ethnographic objects.

Exploring Lin Huixiang's thoughts for the exhibitions allows a better understanding of Taiwanese aboriginal objects and his intentions. He began thinking about the origins of ancient peoples in southern China and Taiwanese aborigines, and cultural connections between the "Bai Yue" and ancient Austronesian people in the 1930s (Lin 1981: 197–9, 301), and gradually established a theoretical framework in the 1950s. Through comparative studies, he proposed that human beings developed from a single origin and emerged into diverse cultures. For instance, his work in the 1930s speculated about the Taiwanese aborigines as related to the Malays. The latter displayed physical, archaeologically determined cultural similarities with ancient Yue people in China (Lin 1932 and 1938). By the 1950s, Lin Huixiang's theory was much clearer. He believed that the ancestors of the Malay inhabited South China, and had "migrated southward to Indochina and islands of South Sea," and those who stayed behind were the ancient Yue (Lin 1957). According to Lin the migration followed two routes: one from India to the Philippines via Sumatra and Java, where impressed ceramics and shouldered stone axes were shared and were typical diagnostic artifacts; another from southeastern China to Taiwan, then to the Philippines, Sulawesi and Borneo, where the shared cultural feature was the use of stepped stone adzes and shouldered stone axes (Lin 1957). He speculated that Taiwanese aboriginal culture had different origins from the ancient Yue and the ancient South Seas people (Lin 1957).

The academically based exhibition avoided the limitations of a nationalist narrative to a certain extent by not entangling politics and ideology. Meanwhile, the multi-ethnic model challenged the theory that the Malay was the only starting point for the Taiwanese aborigines. This idea was supported by Ino Kanori, Torii Ryuzo and other researchers, because it weakened the notion of a cultural connection between Taiwan aborigines and the mainland group. Lin Huixiang tried to keep his academic research at a distance from politics. As he said, "academic research should depend on objectivity, and should not become tools for politics" (Lin 1947). However, we still can find that he also adjusted his research partly to meet ideological needs. For instance, he combined his evolutionary ideas with historic materialism. Taiwanese aboriginal objects placed with other ethnic objects are still used as material evidence of the evolution of human beings. At the same time, the use of the physical, archaeological and

ethnographical similarities between mainland China and Taiwan models fulfilled a political need.

CULTURAL HISTORY RECONSTRUCTION IN TAIWAN (1949–80)

On the other side of the Taiwan Strait, and facing defeat in the civil war, many ethnologists from the Academia Sinica emigrated to Taiwan from mainland China with the Nationalist Government. They took over cultural institutions, reestablished the Academia Sinica, and reinitiated academic activities. As researcher Hu Chiayu (胡家瑜) said about the Taiwan Provincial Museum, the Specimen Room of the Institute of Ethnology in the Academia Sinica and the Specimen Room of the Anthropology Department at National Taiwan University, these were the three main spaces for displaying Taiwanese aboriginal culture from the postwar period to the 1980s (Hu 2006: 108).

During this period, the opposing ideologies and political opinions found on both sides of the Taiwan Strait led academic research and museum practices in different directions. We can also find a shift of academic interests and museum exhibition logic on the island, from constructing the nation identity of the Republic of China to constructing an identity for Taiwan. Taiwan became a province of the Republic of China after 1945 in the eyes of the PRC, and the government tried to make the Taiwanese dispense with the colonial shadow and rebuild a national identity. After 1949, the Kuomintang government concentrated its efforts on economic and cultural construction in Taiwan, and at the same time planned but failed to regain the leadership of China. On an academic level, the Institution of Ethnology of Academia Sinica reorganized in the 1950s, and that opened ethnographical investigations and rebuilt Taiwan regional culture study with ethnologists from other institutions. The complex political situation that ensued was intertwined with museum practices. In the following, I will take exhibitions of the Taiwan Provincial Museum and the Specimen Room of the Institution of Ethnology as examples to analyze the shift from constructing nation identity to the making of Taiwanese Taiwan.

The first case will look at the practices of the Taiwan Provincial Museum as it was used to explain decolonization and to integrate Taiwan into the country. After taking over the Taiwan Governor Museum, the National Government renamed it the Taiwan Provincial Museum, symbolizing the return of Taiwan to the motherland as it became an administrative unit. The first director, Chen Jianshan, pointed out that it was necessary to rethink the foundation of the museum and reorient the mission of the Taiwan Provincial Museum:

Taiwan returned to the embrace of the motherland when World War II ended. We are appointed to take over the Taiwan Governor Museum and reorganize it as the Taiwan Provincial Museum ... The most difficult part is the foundation of the museum, which has to be rethought and changed.

Museums in Japan focus on collecting and displaying, but ignore research institutions giving support to museums. The museum is filled with colonial flavor. Therefore, the takeover is not just a name change, but it is a formidable project. Cleansing the colonial color out of the museum can be achieved in short time; however, establishing a research institution has to be achieved with endurance and effort. (Chen 1948)

Beginning in the 1960s, therefore, the staff of the Taiwan Provincial Museum (台湾省立博物馆) were devoted to removing colonialist elements from museum narrative in the 1950s, and then to transforming it into an academic institution. After World War II and the civil war, the Taiwan Provincial Museum paid more attention to the construction of a nation identity and to highlighting the legality of the Nationalist Government. The whole exhibition consisted of two sections: history and nature. According to the inventory in 1950s sorted by Li Zining (2011), the history section included a “History Showroom,” “Recovery Showroom” and “Ethnic Society Showroom (South Seas).” The curator kept some items and selected others carefully to tell a completely different story about Taiwan.

The “History Showroom” displayed stone tools and historical relics, maps, official documents, portrait paintings from early history to Qing, and divided the prehistoric period into: relics left by Spanish and Dutch, and Southern Ming (南明) period; and Zheng Chenggong’s (郑成功) deeds, relics of the Qing, local relics from mountain compatriots’ folk customs, and records of actions aimed at resisting the invasion of Taiwan province. The exhibition changed its title, subject, content and displays and replaced it with a new narrative logic. Figure 10.2 compares exhibitions in the history section before and after the Taiwan recovery, and shows rhetorical strategies used by the curators to eliminate the previously imposed colonial vision.

The first strategy was to erase the legitimacy of Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan. Compared to the exhibition in the 1930s, the postwar exhibition reduced the number of relics from the Japanese occupation period to two items: a precious sword and the official seal of the Taiwan Governor-General. The latter had symbolized the authority of Japan over Taiwan, but in the new light it simply was introduced as evidence of the defeat of the Japanese. The second effort was to relocate Taiwanese history in the framework of Chinese history and to emphasize that Taiwan was an inalienable part of China from prehistory to the present. The history of “ownership” of the island was often contested, therefore the Japanese thought they had the right to rule just as had the Dutch, Spanish, the Ming or Qing governments. The new exhibition emphasized the supposed sovereignty of China over the island, and aimed to display the Dutch, Spanish or Japanese presence as an occupation. The third goal was to assert the legitimacy of the Nationalist Government in Taiwan. The “Recovery Showroom” displayed the Instrument of Surrender, photos

Taiwan Governor Museum (since 1930s)	Taiwan Provincial Museum (1950s–1960s)
History Section	History Showroom
Prehistory Period	Prehistory Period
Takasago Period	Relics Left by the Spanish and Dutch
Dutch and Spanish Period	Southern Ming period and Zheng Chenggong's deeds
Period of Reign under the Zheng Family	Relics of the Qing, Local Relics, Mountain Compatriots' Folk Customs
Period of Reign under the Qing	Relics Left by Japanese
Period of Occupation of Taiwan	Actions for Resisting Invasion in Taiwan Province
—	Recovery Showroom
Folk Customs Section	Ethnic Society Showroom (South Seas)
Folk Customs of Islanders	Aboriginal Artifacts from South Seas and Taiwan
Folk Customs of Takasago People	
Folk Customs of South Seas	

10.2. Sources from Taiwan Governor Museum (1934) and Li (2011).

before and after Taiwan's recovery, and Chairman Chiang Kai-shek and his wife visiting Taiwan. At the same time, Taiwanese aboriginal objects were removed from the Prehistoric section, leaving only archaeologically recovered stone tools. The metaphorical intention denied the cultural history of Taiwan as constructed by Japanese researchers. They had transplanted the history of Taiwan, especially Taiwan aborigines, into Japanese history. Chinese curators narrated a history about Taiwan as part of the Chinese historical system, and considered Taiwan aborigines within the national idiom according to the National Government. In this way the exhibition represented a continuous and interactive history across the Taiwan Strait. This narrative, however, was interpreted from the point of view of the National Government as a legitimate regime. Except for the relics reflecting interaction between aborigines and Qing government and human models of the Asian races, most Taiwanese aboriginal objects were classified as relics of mountain compatriots. The exhibition used terms like "mountain compatriots' relics" and "local relics" to replace the terms of "Fan" ("barbarian," 蕃) or "hill tribe" that they claimed were discriminatory and colonialist. This rhetorical strategy was certainly aimed at changing the role of Taiwan as a Japanese colony into an administrative district, keeping friendly relations with Taiwan aborigines and trying to integrate them into the new regime.

The Taiwan Provincial Museum played an important role in postwar times in declaring sovereignty, and in building nation-state identity. During the 1950s to 1960s, a series of ethnological investigations were conducted in order to observe the history, social structure, ritual, economy, customs, material culture and social changes since the period of Japanese occupation. Academic

interests turned to the study of regional cultures, and especially studies on the Austronesian language family (Huang 1999: 65–7). The ethnological museum transformed itself into a repository of Taiwanese history and ethnic peoples.

The second case in the Specimen Room at the Institute of Ethnology represented the transition of the exhibition narrative from a politically oriented to an academically oriented one since the 1960s. This showroom of the Institute of Ethnology was founded in 1965 by anthropologist and the first director of the institute Ling Shun-sheng (凌纯声), who aimed to prevent traditional material culture and skills from dying out. During the first ten years, the Institute of Ethnology conducted a series of ethnographical investigations among aboriginal tribes and collected a large quantity of specimens. These artifacts were regarded as material evidence of the national origins of the Taiwan aborigines, of the relations between Taiwan aborigines and ethnic groups in south China, and of social and cultural changes among these groups. According to researcher Hu Chiayu (2006), the showroom displayed Taiwanese aboriginal objects from nine groups and Pingpu, and specimens of other Chinese ethnic minorities. It seems that the early exhibition in the specimen showroom of the Institute of Ethnology reflects the tendency to incorporate the Taiwan aborigines into the ideology of a Chinese nation (中华民族). At the same time, these material specimens from aboriginal culture aroused Ling Shun-sheng's academic interest about circum-Pacific culture. He compared material specimens and suggested that the ethnic groups in the circum-Pacific region originated from China (Ling 1979: 330). Chinese anthropologist Li Yiyuan (李亦园) commented that Ling Shun-sheng's research about ethnic minorities emerged from a Han-centered point of view (Ou 2006: 281).

It is safe to assume that the Specimen Room of the Institute of Ethnology developed by Ling Chunsheng incorporated Taiwanese aboriginal culture into China's ethnic minorities system, and in doing so asserted the dominance of Han culture. This changed with the enrichment of collections from Han culture and other areas around the world beginning in the 1960s. This museum collection and exhibition coincided with the development of Taiwan anthropology. The mission of anthropologists from 1949 to 1965 was to “save the disappearing culture of the Gaoshan nationality”; anthropologists, therefore, took an active part in recording, collecting and studying Taiwanese aboriginal material culture. Researchers continued investigating Han culture as well, and subsequently Taiwan intellectual activity was built up. Since 1980, the research and collection of materials extended to human cultures all over the world (Li 1996).

The Specimen Room of Institute of Ethnology was renamed Specimen Room for Commemoration of Mr. Ling Shunsheng (凌纯声纪念标本室) in 1978. This systematic exhibition was guided by the ideas of LiYiyuan's statement that “the existence of specimen room is not just an objective display of different

ethnic groups' cultures, but also a subjective expression of anthropologists' thoughts and interests about cultural phenomena" (Zheng 1987). Such subjective academic expressions could be discovered in the exhibitions. There were four parts: "Taiwanese aboriginal Culture Exhibition" (台湾土著民族文化展); "Folk Religion of Han People in Taiwan" (台湾汉人民间宗教); "Exhibition of Ethnic Relics in Frontier Areas of Mainland China" (大陆边疆民族文物展); and "Exhibition of Ethnographical Specimens from the Pacific Area" (太平洋地区民族学标本收藏展) (Zheng 1987).

The exhibition hall consisted of a brief history of Taiwan and a statement about the traditional culture of Taiwan aborigines and their cultural adaptation. "A Brief History of Taiwan" introduced geographic change from Pleistocene to Holocene and human evolution. Then the displays followed an historic framework and displayed ancient inhabitants from prehistory onward and the migration of the Austronesian people and Taiwan indigenous people in the early seventeenth century. The display of the migration of Han Chinese to Taiwan followed, including the migration and sinicization of the Pingpu (or Pepo) (平埔) indigenous people. In this section, the exhibition described a continuous history for Taiwan, locating Taiwan aborigines in a broad Austronesian language family and proposing that Taiwan was a multi-ethnic society from ancient times. Unlike the museum of nationalities in mainland China, the museum did not emphasize the cultural link across the Taiwan Strait, but rather constructed a regional history within a multi-ethnic system for Taiwan.

Taiwanese aboriginal culture was the main focus of this exhibition and included displays of "Plains Aborigines" and "Mountain Aborigines," showing images of multi-ethnic Taiwan. The "Mountain Aborigines" section introduced nine ethnic groups including the Atayal, Saisiat, Bunu, Tsou, Rukai, Paiwan, Puyuma, Ami and Yami. Collections reflected social and spiritual life, material culture and skills. The curator chose the "typical" cultural characteristic of each ethnic group, such as tattooing and the weaving skills of the Atayal, the ritual of Pas-ta'ai in Saisiat, the ritual of Mayasvi of the Tsou, wood carving in Paiwan, kinship and pottery making among the Ami, and boats and house construction among the Yami. At the same time, the intention of integrating these multi-ethnic cultures into a new common society was obvious. In the last section, called "Cultural Adaptation," aboriginal cultures were merged into modern society and the exhibition advocated respect for the aboriginal cultures in order to create a harmonious multicultural society.

Museum exhibition narratives in Taiwan constructed a new regional history and multicultural society, and got rid of Japanese colonial discourses. A series of prehistoric findings and the continuity of stratigraphic evidence of occupation revealed that "ancient people resided in Taiwan since Pleistocene" (Chang 1999: 157), and thus Taiwan had a scientific cultural origin. In the

regional cultural history narratives, the Han and aborigines were listed as Taiwanese, and multicultural Taiwan was deemed the Taiwanese Taiwan. The exhibition depicted an ethic group image of Taiwan, the material, social and spiritual world of Taiwan, and the Taiwan aborigines as a branch of the Austronesian language family and the interaction with Taiwan aborigines and Han people. It is worth emphasizing that scholars from both nations agreed on the idea that the Taiwan aborigines belonged to the Austronesian language family. Argued on physical, linguistic, material and ethnographical evidence, they still debated the origin and route of migration of these groups into Taiwan. On the other side of the Taiwan Strait, a completely different image was constructed. Taiwanese aboriginal objects were situated into a model where multiple nationalities existed, regardless of the fact that the nature of the bridge across the Taiwan Strait was disputed. Regardless of the narrative from Taiwan or mainland China, aboriginal objects were and are still used to construct ethnic/national narratives full of political and academic objectives. This continues to allow the absence of the voice of the Taiwan aborigines.

CONCLUSION

The period from 1895 to 1980 was filled with tension between colonial and anti-colonial powers, opposition of ideologies between mainland China and Taiwan, and intertwined relationships between exhibition and political needs and academic interests. This chapter regards museums in mainland China and Taiwan as arenas where different powers fight and tangle with each other. I have selected one stage of the social life of Taiwanese aboriginal objects to explore the rhetorical and political nature of exhibitions through the process of contextualization and re-contextualization. In fact, these objects were removed from Taiwanese aboriginal groups into museums, given symbolic or academic value, ordered within a structured classification system, and then “became ethnographic” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 387). In this timeless space, Taiwanese aboriginal objects were used to depict a microscopic cultural and ethnic image of Taiwan aborigines, and viewed as “living fossils” or “material proof” used to explore the origins of Japanese history, Chinese nationalities and/or Taiwanese history.

Taiwanese aboriginal objects were used to construct colonial narratives, anti-colonial narratives, decolonization and re-contextualization. During the period of Japanese occupation, these ethnographic objects along with other collections depicted an image of a rising colonial empire in Asia, and represented Japanese colonial expansion and achievements in a new colony. For Japanese researchers, Taiwanese aboriginal objects became the key to explore the cultural origins of Taiwan and even Japan, while using an historical narrative in exhibitions that

justified Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan. Practices of collecting and exhibiting Taiwanese aboriginal objects by Chinese researchers linked both sides of the Taiwan Strait, coincided with ethnographical studies in borderlands, and tried to evoke public patriotism for anti-colonialism. After 1949, opposing ideologies guided and created two very different exhibition models even though both were devoted to decolonization and efforts to include aborigines in national narratives through re-contextualization.

Even so, Taiwan aborigines were absent and voiceless in exhibitions during this period. Voices of aborigines were completely overwhelmed by external powers struggling and tangling with each other in an arena consisting of material objects. Political and scholarly discourse imposed on the aboriginal objects created and recreated different meaning. With the aboriginal movements since 1980s, museums in Taiwan and mainland China have begun to rethink their orientation. Respect for the representation of the voice of Taiwan aborigines has led to change in museum practices. From this point of view, the social life of Taiwanese aboriginal objects will continue to expand and will be given new meaning.

NOTE

Here, I use the term “Taiwanese aboriginal object” to refer to artifacts manufactured by Taiwan aborigines. Susan M. Pearce distinguishes differences among “thing,” “object” and “artifact,” and points out that “thing” is an ordinary word for all items and non-material matters bearing on our daily lives. “Artifact” emphasizes material objects skillfully made. But “object” bears implications of intellectual discourse (1994: 10–11). From this point of view, the word “object” implies meaning construction. Material things manufactured by Taiwan aborigines were called “native products,” “folk artifacts,” “specimens” or “ethnic relics,” all full of political and intellectual color. Therefore, I use “aboriginal object” with constructed and flexible meanings in this chapter.

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ELEVEN

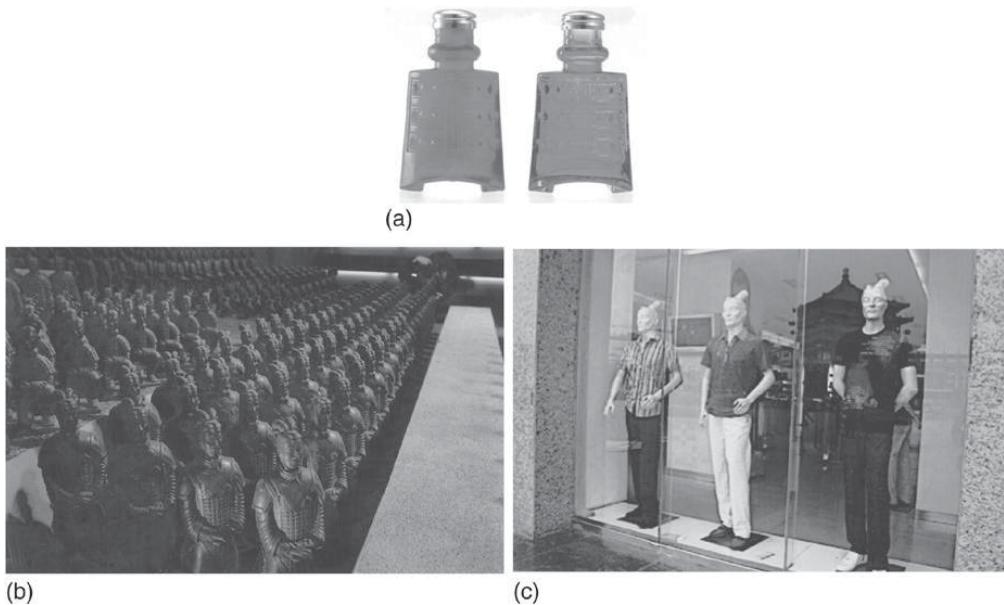
ARTIFACTS THAT INVOKE THE AURA AND AUTHORITY OF THE ANCIENT

Katheryn M. Linduff

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, antiquity is a commodity. Some items from China's past have captured the imagination of the international tourist trade and have been recreated with a flavor of the past that appeals to the present ([Figure 11.1](#)). Transmission of an ancient object, or its type or style, presumably satisfied the urge to possess, legitimate or create status and some form of identity. Although references to the past in Chinese history were *de rigueur* and pre-modern and modern historians have struggled to tell that history in a linear and unbroken fashion, acknowledging grievances with and ruptures in the past (Shelach-Lavi, [chapter 1](#) in this volume) can also be found. When examining visual culture as evidence of attitudes, references to the past vary according to local and period circumstances and show that a non-linear view of the past and its traditions is too simplified.

The reuse or remaking of particular ancient objects to fuel the taste for the ancient in China began very early – at least as early as the Shang, as witnessed in the collection of jades in the Tomb of Lady Hao at Anyang (c. 1200 BCE, Institute of Archaeology [1980](#)). Perhaps a collector herself, Fu Hao (妇好) took to her burial carved jades of previous periods as well as some modeled after earlier pieces. In this case it was probably her dowry (Linduff [1996](#)) where the reuse of old objects probably marked her heritage. From the perspective of the family she joined upon her marriage, such objects could have been



11.1. Contemporary borrowings.

- a. Salt shakers in the shape of ancient bronze bells, green glass, 8 cm high, the National Palace Museum, Taipei, reproduction, 2009. (Photo by author.)
- b. Chocolate soldiers, Xi'an, Shaanxi, 2009. (Photo courtesy of TzeHuey Chiou-Peng.)
- c. Terracotta soldier mannequins, Xi'an, 2008. (Photo courtesy of Sherri Lullo.)

thought of as old and from far away, thus adding the air of the exotic to her dowry. In that scenario, the royal family might have considered that these items displayed access to or control of the ‘outside’ world, confirming their channel to power. What these examples point out is that objects that do not belong to the ‘here and now’ can simultaneously be admired, appreciated, and/or venerated for different reasons. In addition, as we shall see, it is the general form and/or material of certain artifacts (ritual bronze vessels and jades, or the metal or jade substance itself) that act as a prompt or reference to its original function and context. That reference thereby allows the aura of the past to project power and authority to such old or newly configured items in the present.

During the Western Han dynasty the government institutionalized the replication of certain objects, including ones aimed at funerary use (Ledderose 2000; Barbieri-Low 2007), and ancient items were reworked to suit current ideas and practice. For example, a Neolithic jade *cong* was recarved into a box and placed in the tomb of the Crown Prince Liu Sheng (劉勝; died 113 BCE) in Mancheng, Hebei, and another Neolithic jade *cong* was fixed with a silver covering on a gilt silver stand with three eagle-shaped feet in a tomb in Sanlidun, Lienshui, Jiangsu (江苏), both dating from the second century

BCE (Xia 1983: 27). In those cases, the reuse of an older worked piece of jade documented the importance of the past, but the new items after their conversion no longer served the ancient ceremonial function. Although ‘raw’ jade was available nearby, these objects transmitted a new significance because of their shapes and newer updated use, and presumably the jade material itself bore value to the owners and perhaps the viewers. The reworking of originals in the Han recorded a life history of objects that remade certain items and, in doing so, perhaps repaired the past.

A selective revival of the ‘Golden Age’ antiquities and antique types took place especially in the late Song and early Ming when very few original artifacts were extant. Objects that reflected the aura of the past celebrated the truth, beauty and morality of the past and supported the production of catalogues of selected ancient bronzes and jades that canonized types and decor. In the Ming and especially the later Qing dynasty collections of ancient-type items were formed on a regular basis that included items of older styles. The surfaces of the ancient-style bronze vessels, for instance, had even been treated with special chemical substances to make them look patinated, or simply old (Guimlia-Mair 2017). That these items had been transformed to incorporate new ornamentation and precious materials enhanced their commercial and social value (Figure 11.2).

Although not always simultaneously, transmission from the past took three forms that allowed: first, reuse of an ancient original; second, reworking of the ancient object; and third, copying and thus remaking of an ancient model. In other words, visions of the past as marked in material culture as well as by historians were not always the same. It is my hope here to recount the biographies of some of these later bronze types and to suggest what forces in the elite culture were so strong that the process of creating icons of the past in the form of early ritual bronze vessels was repeated so often.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE ROLE OF THINGS

When troubling over the role of things/objects as an expression of belief, Morgan proposed that things and settings are mediated only by human practice, often motivated by ritual or custom (Morgan 2010: 14). He went on to say, “One of the things that cultures do is seek to discern and produce relative stabilities for the sake of constructing and maintaining life-worlds. Things are manufactured as sensory objects, [to be] socially shared and circulating, and apprehended through the lens or grip or scent of culturally defined practices or templates. A person’s sense of a thing, in other words, is socially and culturally constructed. Things circulate through a variety of protocols of exchange. They are displayed, hidden, disguised, forgotten,



11.2. Ming and Qing versions of ancient objects.

(Photo: Institute of Archaeology, CASS 1980. 中国社会科学院考古研究所 1980. Image from: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:_妇好_夔足方鼎_20160924_\(6\).jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:_妇好_夔足方鼎_20160924_(6).jpeg).)

- a. Fuhao *fangding*, c. 1200 BCE, bronze, excavated 1976, Anyang, Henan.
- b. King Wen *fangding*, bronze, 10 cm wide, 14 cm high, late Ming dynasty, seventeenth century. From the Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (#001211). (Photo courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.)
- c. Rectangular cauldron (*fangding*) with animal mask design, porcelain, 19.3 cm high, 15.5 cm wide, second half of seventeenth century, early Qing dynasty, the Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (#001113). (Photo courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.)
- d. Rectangular cauldron (*fangding*) with animal mask design, jade, 15.2 cm high, 11.8 cm wide, Qing dynasty, the Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (#003992). (Photo courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.)
- e. Rectangular cauldron (*fangding*) with animal mask design, cloisonné, 33.7 cm high, 21.2 cm wide, Qianlong reign (1736–95), Qing dynasty, the Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (#000883). (Photo courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.)

destroyed, re-created. They exhibit biographies and are often best studied over time" (Morgan 2010: 14). He acknowledges that the lives of images and things are restless as they migrate from one setting to another, showing how meaning is inconsistent and best understood within the itinerary of an object's travel. This throws light on the importance that people bring to images, to the agency that the images can exhibit, to the transience of meaning, to the way in which images become 'sites of contestation' between rival parties, and to the interdependence of images, narratives, and their physical and social contexts (Morgan 2010: 14).

Much theorizing has focused on contexts of exchange, while understanding that objects and object types accumulate biographies as they are repeatedly made and/or exchanged among people. But as Morgan points out, objects need not be exchanged, for in some contexts, such as ceremonial ritual performances, meanings are created and produce object biographies. That is, meaning does not inhere in objects and they must be performed and witnessed to gain meaning (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 175). Or, as Gosden and Marshall point out, there is a distinction between objects that accumulate biographies to themselves, such as the Elgin marbles, and objects that contribute to the biography of ceremony or a body of knowledge, such as the performance masks in the Northwest Coast of America (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 176). So, at least two distinct situations or circumstances may contribute to the biographies of objects: one where objects are performed and another where the objects are catapulted through time and across space.

My interest is an extension of this thinking – that is, we all understand that varying uses and contexts in which a single object may live will alter its role and even its cultural treatment, benefit, or 'meaning', but not necessarily its intrinsic form. In other words, a single item of burial such as a Shang ritual bronze vessel will have a life before, during, and after the death of the owner, and those who participated in each performance would witness the object differently. In other circumstances, however, these very same objects are created anew, copied, and are modified, reformed, and fundamentally remade. What is of interest to me here is when and why visual models become canonized, especially ancient ones, and then transmitted, revived, and/or adjusted for local purposes. I wonder how they evoked the aura and authority of the past, and additionally, how and why works 'broke away' from the past. That is, was copying at some points seen as negative and/or regressive, in contrast to, for example, in today's art market where certain copies – even if once seen as 'regressive' – have become articles of trade, commodities that are bought and sold and found useful and/or valuable for some practical or utilitarian, political, or perhaps even ritualized purpose?

REPLICATION AND REPRODUCTION

Both art historians and anthropologists have discussed replication or the reproduction of artifacts as an indication of the importance of visual culture in the construction of social values and hierarchies. For instance, if replication of a type or style of artifact was thought to display an artisan's lineage or confirm a consumer's status, repetition and/or innovation might be encouraged. Or, the collection of earlier and 'remade' jades in the tomb of Fuhao at Anyang would suggest that it was consistency in type and material that was valued rather than originality. Ancient models, therefore, might be used in a dialectic between old and new, between one community or group and another, such as between one's natal and marital families, as with the tomb of Fuhao (Linduff 2002; 2003: Fig. 5d). Many such images/objects are used to reinforce personal or group political legitimacy, or to objectify the 'other' and/or perhaps to recall better times in periods of economic or political stability. Sometimes artifacts are imbedded in an overall process of 'localizing' – when images/items/artifacts were used to stimulate the audience's imagination of the past and to confirm their connection to it. This process and transference of meaning could occur among the elite, as well as the moneyed merchants who sold goods and/or traders who delivered them where earlier models were known and could therefore evoke distant memories.

MEMORIALIZING THE PAST

If we can assume that people remember or forget the past according to the needs of the present, and that social memory can involve direct links to ancestors in a remembered past as the inscriptions on Shang and Zhou bronze vessels did, or can involve general links to a vague mythological antiquity that is based often on the reinterpretation of monuments and objects (Gosden and Lock 1998; VanDyke and Alcock 2003), then the recreation of early bronzes in later Chinese dynasties (Song, Ming, and Qing) could be seen as memorials that connected their patrons and collectors of a later time to some aspects of the glorious Chinese past (Figure 11.3). The creation of these 'Chinese' memories could and probably did encourage a conception of a seamless social or historical whole, whether produced and/or used among the dominating or dominated classes (Alcock 2002). They could legitimate authority in developing and/or already developed societies when power, survival, or advancement were at stake (Le Goff 1992: 97–8); and support a sense of individual and community identity with China's aristocratic past.

And, although most agree that the creation of this social memory as witnessed in and through objects is an ongoing process, it is one that changes given particular settings and groups. Ritual behavior, narratives, representative objects,



(a)



(b)

11.3. Models of ancient vessels.

- a. Bronze *hu* vessel modeled after a Yuan illustration, seventeenth century, Ming dynasty. Design (modeled after the illustration in the *Kaogu tu*) 31.3 cm high, 20.5 cm wide at bottom, seventeenth century, Ming, the Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (#001034). (Photo Courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.)
- b. Illustrated *Kaogu tu*, eleventh century (Yuan copy). *Illustrated Research on Antiquities (Kaogu tu)*, Lu Dalin, 1027, first edition. Revised edition by Chen Yizu, 1299, Yuan dynasty. (Photo courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.)

and commemorative places are frequently cited as the nodes that create and use memory as a practice (VanDyke and Alcock 2003: 4–5). These occurrences can and do involve objects, frequently ones that either are old or ones that are made to look so. And as David Lowenthal has said, “The past is everywhere. All around us lay features that, like ourselves and our thoughts, have more or less recognizable antecedents. Relics, histories, memories suffuse human experience” (Lowenthal 1985: xv). That is, people of the past observed and interpreted traces of the more distant past to serve the needs of their present lives (VanDyke and Alcock 2003: 1).

When we extend the analysis through time and across space to include the thousands of items that were recreated after a supposed antique model during a period of revival, the biography of the object must deconstruct its de-ritualization and re-conceptualization. This complicates the issue even further and leads to some surprising challenges to our theoretical framework mentioned above. I speak in particular of objects and object types that were collected and published in archaeological catalogues such as the *Kaogu tu* (考古圖 Illustrated Catalogue of Examined Antiquity) by Lu Dalin (呂大臨 1046–92), produced first in the eleventh century during the Northern Song dynasty (Figure 11.3b). Subsequently those drawings were revived and repeated in the early Ming and later Qing when actual copies of the ritual bronze vessels were probably even modeled after the published line drawings (Poor 1965). This much longer time frame allows us to examine the process through which visual iterations of the past came into being.

EXCHANGE AND IMITATION

Interaction can provoke many reactions and create many responses. When is it, then, and under what conditions do the craftworkers or artisans accept, adopt, adjust, import, and/or slavishly copy material culture from beyond their own local traditions? Does the interaction cause an active, generative force in the visual culture? Does it significantly alter and enlarge the vision of artisans, and/or even their audiences? Or did a group simply create a vision of the outside culture? For instance, the arrival of seventeenth-century Asian arts and crafts worked no transformation in French art – rather the artifacts were exotic imports themselves transformed beyond recognition in the eighteenth century into something entirely French. Chinoiserie décor created a fairyland that had very little to do with gaining knowledge of the past.

In some instances, contact with the outside world provoked a nativist response, such as the emergence of Yamato-e, or native Japanese style painting, in twelfth-century Japan. There, the emergence of a local style was intimately tied to the nationalist aspirations of the Fujiwara leadership. Retention and revival of native traditions, including material culture that so defines the

archaeological cultures of the past, may also represent resistance to outside intrusion.

This may be a central motivation when revivals of early dynastic bronze models took place – as in the Song when Chinese hegemony was threatened, objects thought to be ancient were recorded as if being repossessed in published volumes like Lu Dalin's well-known *Kaogu tu* of 1027, which described bronzes already in the imperial and private collections (Figure 11.3). The earliest extant version of this manuscript dates from 1299, and because of that edition and many others dating from later periods, it is clear that these catalogues were thought to illustrate genuinely ancient artifacts, for the most part bronze ritual vessels from the Shang and Zhou (Poor 1965: 33, 39–40). Watson proposed years ago that “the diffusion of these illustrated works gave capital assistance to the copyist of antique bronzes … affirmed the local traditions and kept them current” (Watson 1962: 85).

During the Northern Song and later, ancient items were not ritualized in burial as they had been in earlier times, but were collected and revered as reminders of or footnotes to the golden periods of the past. They were recognized as archetypal and were remade along guidelines of contemporary taste. They were generally considered to be of the highest quality or lasting value; authoritative and perfect as a standard of their kind; simple, restrained, and refined in style; always fashionable and elegant. As Clunas confirms, the late Ming bronzes conformed to accepted principles or methods of décor established before the Ming and were generally considered to be of the highest quality and of enduring value and excellence (Clunas 1991: 91). These revivals in the Song and Ming created an archaeological memory that linked them directly to the Shang and Zhou dynasties and the Song, and later elite, primarily the literati, justified their lifestyle and status through reverence of the ancient past. Possession of bronzes and jades made for this purpose were the outward signs of superiority, refinement, and acceptable life achievements in the present.

It is generally assumed that some Han examples were still extant in the Song and that, at least in that period, and they became the models for illustration, and also for the bronzerasters. Bob Mowry has written that “by the Tang Dynasty [618–906], China was an exceptionally cosmopolitan nation, the markets of its capital [were] … filled with foreign goods, its streets trafficked by people of diverse nationalities and speaking exotic languages, and its restaurants featuring the enticing cuisines of faraway lands” (Mowry 2008: 17). But perhaps playing on a long dormant suspicion of things foreign, a faction at court sought political advantage by initiating a series of persecutions of the Buddhists in 824, by confiscating property, destroying temples, and returning monks and nuns to lay status. This move ushered in a long period of cultural self-examination that lasted well into the Song and sought to define

Chinese culture by distinguishing the native from the foreign, always awarding the prize to the native (Mowry 2008: 17). This period also saw the reassertion of Confucianism, which fueled the preference, for instance, for the *qin* over the Eurasian stringed instruments that had been so popular in the Tang, and monochrome glazed ceramics over the more exotic Tang gold and silver vessels that were modeled after West Asian prototypes.

Antiquity served as the standard in identifying and defining things Chinese as early as the Han, as suggested in the tomb at Mancheng (满城区) and in Jiangsu mentioned at the outset. Serendipitous finds of bronzes had always been considered auspicious, but the systematic collecting of antiquities came in the Northern Song (960–1127) when ancient bronzes or ones that exhibited an aura of the past were prized as tangible bits of history and something that the Duke of Zhou or Confucius might also have once held. Scholars realized that some of the bronzes included inscriptions that they considered to be original documents of cardinal importance to historians and epigraphers, although few could actually read them and many were spurious in any case. The script was an ancient form that had not been used for over a thousand years, but was a distant ancestor of their current language. As historical documents, and relics of the hallowed past, archaic and archaizing bronzes were collected enthusiastically by emperors, well-to-do scholars, officials, and aristocrats. Paintings that show these men studying their collections from the Song and later are still called *Baigu tu* (百 古 图) or ‘One Hundred Antiquities’. This renewed interest in antiquities in the Song resulted in the compilation of illustrated catalogues, including ones of ancient bronzes. Surprisingly, the images served as models for designing ‘new’ bronzes and ceramics as well (Poor 1965; Mowry 2008: 18) (Figure 11.3).

The literati not only collected old bronzes, but they used them particularly when learned friends gathered. Perhaps because they knew that these were originally made for rituals and were fragile or could be ruined, they often sought newly made items modeled after these prized antiquities to be used for incense burners and flower vases. In doing so, they encouraged a renaissance in bronze and a taste for the archaism that is the hallmark of early modern Chinese culture beginning in the Northern Song (Mowry 2008).

Song bronzes typically imitated the shapes of the ancient vessels, but their ornament derives from a variety of sources, including those from the ancient vessels, and often combines motifs from disparate periods and places. Imperially commissioned bronzes from the Xuande reign of the Ming dynasty (1426–35) apparently ranked among the most exquisite of all altar (?) bronzes, and were admired for their elegant shapes, sublime colors, delicate inlays, and perfect casting. Often large, Ming and Qing period bronzes were cast as well as raised from sheet metal or assembled from hammered components. The decorative schemes range from archaic to abstract, from formalistic to naturalistic

and even eclectic. Designs that wished the viewer health, marital happiness, and success in the civil service exams became popular in the Qing (Mowry 2008: 19–21) and confirmed the owners' worth, position, and identity.

But whatever the design, we still have not explained why the artist/artisan/craftworker made and remade such items, except to say that there were commissions and a market for them. Clearly exact copying and having an 'authentic' item was not necessary, but signs of transmission from the past were. Even the Chinese language did not accommodate 'authenticity' as a concept, and used the term 'old' (古) to denote these materials, as in the *Kaogu tu* (考古圖 *Illustrated Catalogue of Examined Antiquity*) compiled by Lu Dalin (呂大臨, c. 1042–90) in the Northern Song. Only items that were old were important. Repetitive copying was a reasoned, consciously undertaken act in the production of artwork already in the Han period (Ledderose 2000; Barbieri-Low 2007), and by the fifth century aesthetic criticism of Xie He (谢赫 d. 406 CE) and his *Six Principles of Painting* (绘画六法) named copying as one of its six standards. From the Tang period on, these *Principles* were discussed, reinterpreted, and recast in light of contemporary politics and patronage. Copying was never dismissed; it was treated as an essential feature of learning how to create and was recorded in ancient texts on craftworking (*Kaogong ji* 考工记, fifth century BCE) that Confucian thinkers revived over and over. It was republished many times, in the Tang (eighth century CE), in the Southern Song (1235), and at least twice after that in the Ming (1746), and Qing (1805), and again in 2008 in Shanghai. 'Copying' in artifact production guided thinking about many of the crafts, even though they (sculpture, architecture, bronze-casting, city planning, etc.) were never considered 'art'. Architecture, for instance, regularly repeated ancient forms and formats, technology and materials, and by doing so clearly confirmed one's association with historical precedent as well as the highly regarded skills of artisans of the past. Thus, even texts (and ideas) about certain artifacts and technologies gained biographies as well.

This respect for repetitive practice was probably the key to the distribution and reception of these bronzes (and jades) in early modern China, or from the Song through the Qing. Song Neo-Confucians associated antiquity with a Confucian worldview that saw the past as superior to the present, following the path determined by ancient sages and masters. In that way of thinking, reproduction was an ideal, and copying with the use of inscriptions and seals could prove the existence and absorption of Confucian inner values. Thus, reproduction was linked to the transmission of ideals and was reflected in the discourse regarding the formal characteristics of ancient-style objects and documented in painting such as Liu Songnian's (刘松年 1174–1224) *Examining Antiquities* (Figure 11.4). But it was more than mere enjoyment; it was thought to be edifying and a cultivation of a refinement in craftsmanship and loftiness in style. It signified a better period, and was an occupation that could take the



11.4. *Enjoying Antiquities*, Du Jin, ink and color on silk (Ming, 1368–1644). The Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (#003690). (Photo Courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.)

connoisseur out of the troubling times of the present while occupying himself with matters of collecting and the art market (Yang 2002: 30). Copying, which had had philosophic justification as early as the fifth century with Xie He, allowed canonization to be seen as a yearning and confirmation of the ideals of a harmonious and ordered society. The Song had created a myth of the Confucian past that had been placed in cultural discourse among antiquarians (Yang 2002).

CONCLUSION

So, one may seek to understand the way objects become invested with meanings through the social interactions they are caught up in (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 170). Changes in meaning are not always driven by physical modification or use of an object, but meaning emerges from social action and the assignment of purpose to an artifact; biographies of the objects illuminate that process (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 170). As illustrated in the Song and Ming reuse of Shang and Zhou bronzes, the histories of the objects shift focus to one dependent on context (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 174); the function of regeneration or replacement; the items' ancestors and descendants; the memories of it that are held by its actors; the ghosts that are held within its materials

of manufacture; and in its written documentation. The Song, Ming, and Qing literati and even the emperors mythologized the past and documented its relevance to their present through commissioning and collecting reproductions of the hallmarks of royal authority of the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang, and Zhou) such as are preserved in the National Palace Museum Collections in Taipei today. By doing so they linked themselves to the ancestors of elite Chinese society, phantoms of the past, separated themselves from others in society, and affirmed high status and position for themselves and their heirs.

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